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# STUDIES, NEW AND OLD

BY

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In Memoriam

SORORIS.

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By the same Author.



THE METAPHYSICS OF JOHN STUART MILL. 1879.

STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY, ANCIENT AND MODERN.  
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THE majority of the Essays which follow were published in the *Fortnightly Review*. The first and last appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*, and the paper on 'Jacqueline Pascal' in *Time*. My thanks are due to the Editors for their kindness in allowing me to republish them. The paper on 'Descartes and the Princess Elizabeth' appears for the first time.

*Oxford, March 1888.*





# STUDIES, NEW AND OLD.

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## HOBBS.

THERE exists a remarkable contrast, which has probably been often noticed, between the character of the speculations of Hobbes, and their historical fortune. He has been claimed by thinkers who believe themselves following in his footsteps as a radical freethinker, while in himself he was especially conservative and reactionary. The stoutest advocate of the irresponsible and inviolable authority of an absolute sovereign has been accepted as a prototype by those whose interest it was to advance the claims of democratic equality. It was James Mill who began this remarkable reverence for a man whose conclusions, at all events in a political sphere, were diametrically opposed to his own; and he was followed by Austin and Grote. Sir W. Molesworth in his magnificent edition of Hobbes's works, both English and Latin, tells us that Grote first suggested the undertaking; in order, seemingly, to secure by an

accessible edition greater effect for doctrines which their author intended as a panacea for projects of revolutionary reform.\* No more curious homage has ever been rendered to a man by his theoretical opponents. Obvious though the contrast may appear, it is, however, more apparent than real. For of Hobbes, before all others, it may be said that his spirit was different from his performance, that his political motive was one thing, and his intellectual temper and genius quite another. There can be no question that the native bent of his mind was radical and freethinking, which is proved among other evidences by his life-long struggle with ecclesiastical pretensions, and his heartfelt dislike of the Papacy. His philosophy again partook of that general revolt against authority on behalf of the individual which characterizes all the best thought of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; he has some points in connection with Bacon, and many with Descartes and Locke, and he carried on the war with scholasticism in the interest of a mechanical and atomistic system which is the philosophic mark of advanced heterodoxy. However much Hobbes may have imposed on some of his later critics, he assuredly did not deceive his contemporaries, who were never weary of calling him materialist, free-thinker, and atheist. Even in his political theory, which contains the conservative elements of his creed, the conclusions do not follow from the premisses with that logical rigour

\* "Georgio Grote—et quod præcipue laudi est, pro æquali universorum civium libertate adversus optimatum dominatum propugnatori acerrimo et constantissimo."—Dedication in Molesworth's edition, vol. i.

which would prevent them from being interpreted in a wholly different light. The strong and autocratic government which it is his desire in the 'Leviathan' to see firmly established, however absolute it may be, is yet shown to have sprung from something like popular choice, and that which has made can also unmake. From his own premisses a different conclusion might be drawn, as we can see by the political speculations of both Locke and Rousseau, the first of whom proved the right of the people to change their choice of sovereign, and the second justified the popular obliteration of the *ancien régime*. Indeed, Hobbes's own practice dealt a blow at his theory, for he found it not inconsistent with his principles to live under the protection of Cromwell and the Parliament. The complexion of his political theory was in reality due to his personal feelings, which were both timorous and worldly. Personal security (not self-realization or a desire for progressive welfare,) is therefore the aim of those who established an 'imperium,' and Hobbes affords an instance—almost a melancholy instance—of the extent to which political necessities and the accidents of personal disposition can interfere in the logical evolution of a philosophical system. He was a radical in the garb of a conservative, a freethinker enlisted in the service of reaction.

The personality of Hobbes was neither pleasing nor attractive. He was prematurely born owing to the fright his mother experienced at the news of the Spanish Armada of 1588, as he tells us himself:—

“Atque metum tantum concepit tunc mea mater,  
 Ut pareret geminos, meque Metumque simul.  
 Hinc est, ut credo, patrios quod abominor hostes,  
 Pacem amo cum Musis, et faciles socios.” \*

It is doubtful, however, whether Hobbes is right in saying that he is devoted to peace and agreeable companionship; a more vain and combative person rarely existed. In his youth, Aubrey† tells us, he was “unhealthy, and of an ill complexion (yellowish). From forty he grew healthier, and then he had a fresh ruddy complexion. His head was of a mallet form; his face was not very great—ample forehead, yellowish reddish whiskers, which naturally turned up, below he was shaved close, except a little tip under his lip; not but that nature would have afforded him a venerable beard, but being mostly of a cheerful and pleasant humour, he affected not at all austerity and gravity, and to look severe.” His portraits (in the National Portrait Gallery, and in the rooms of the Royal Society at Burlington House) give the appearance of a somewhat stern but not unhandsome man. Far more unpleasing pictures than that of Aubrey are, however, to be found in the writings of Hobbes’s contemporaries.‡ He seems indeed to have been the terror of his age.

\* “Vita carmine expressa.”—Molesw. vol. i. p. lxxxvi.

† ‘Life of Mr. T. H. of Malmesburie.’ ‘Letters,’ &c. of Aubrey, vol. ii.

‡ Cf., for instance, Hooke’s description, Boyle’s Works, vi. p. 486.



“ Here lies Tom Hobbes, the Bugbear of the Nation,  
Whose death hath frightened Atheism out of fashion,”

was a scurrilous epitaph composed for him. Amongst the crowd of pamphlets, sermons, treatises aimed at his doctrines, there was an ingenious little book written by Thomas Tenison, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, which appeared in 1670, and was entitled ‘The Creed of Mr. Hobbes, examined in a feigned conference between him and a student in divinity.’ It proves, as well as any other, the general opinions held about the philosopher.

“ You have been represented to the world,” says the student to Mr. Hobbes, whom he meets at Buxton-well,\* “as a person very inconvertible, and as an imperious dictator of the principles of vice, and impatient of all dispute and contradiction. It hath been said that you will be very angry with all men that will not presently submit to your dictates; and that for advancing the reputation of your own skill, you care not what unworthy reflections you cast on others. Monsieur Descartes hath written it to your confidant Mersennus, and it is now published to all the world, ‘that he esteemed it the better for himself that he had not any commerce with you (*je juge que le meilleur est que je n’aye point du tout de commerce avec luy*); as also, that if you were of such an humour as he imagined, and had such designs as he believed you had, it would be impossible for him and you to have any communication without becoming enemies.’ And your great friend, Monsieur Sorbière, hath accused

\* ‘The Creed of Mr. Hobbes,’ p. 5.

you of being too dogmatical; and hath reported how you were censured for the vanity of dogmatizing, between his Majesty and himself, in his Majesty's Cabinet. You are thought, in dispute, to use the Scripture with irreverence."

Tenison cannot, indeed, deny the excellence of his style.

"He hath long ago published his errours in Theologie, in the, English tongue, insinuating himself by the handsomeness of his style into the mindes of such whose Fancie leadeth their judgements; and to say truth of an Enemy, he may, with some reason, pretend to Mastery in that Language."

Yet he cannot forbear to have a cut at Hobbes's personal timidity.

"They (the Student and Mr. Hobbes) were interrupted by the disturbance arising from a little quarrel, in which some of the ruder people in the house were for a short time engaged. At this Mr. Hobbes seem'd much concern'd, though he was at some distance from the persons. For a while he was not composed, but related it once or twice as to himself, with a low and careful tone, how Sextus Roscius was murdered after supper by the Balneæ Palatinæ. Of such general extent is that remark of Cicero, in relation to Epicurus the atheist, of whom he observed that he of all men dreaded most those things which he contemned, Death and the Gods."

The system of Hobbes is then reduced into twelve Articles, "which sound harshly to those professing Christianity," under the title of the Hobbist's creed:—

"I believe that God is Almighty Matter; that in him

there are three Persons, he having been thrice represented on earth; that it is to be decided by the Civil Power whether he created all things else; that Angels are not Incorporeal substances (those words implying a contradiction) but preternatural impressions on the brain of man; that the Soul of Man is the temperament of his Body; that the very Liberty of Will, in that Soul, is Physically necessary; that the prime Law of Nature in the Soul of Man is that of temporal Self-Love; that the Law of the Civil Sovereign is the only obliging Rule of just and unjust; that the Books of the Old and New Testament are not made Canon and Law, but by the Civil Powers; that whatsoever is written in the Books may lawfully be denied even upon Oath (after the laudable doctrine and practice of the Gnosticks) in times of persecution when men shall be urged by the menaces of Authority; that Hell is a tolerable condition of life, for a few years upon earth, to begin at the General Resurrection; and that Heaven is a blessed estate of good men, like that of Adam before his fall, beginning at the General Resurrection, to be from thenceforth eternal upon earth in the Holy Land.”\*

There is caricature in all this, but not so extravagant as to prevent it from being a fair picture of Hobbes as he appeared to a contemporary divine. Fortunately, as Samuel Johnson had his Boswell and Goethe his Eckermann, so Hobbes had an indulgent biographer in Aubrey.

Hobbes, like an elder philosopher with whose nominalism

\* ‘Creed of Mr. Hobbes,’ pp. 7, 8.

he had something in common, Antisthenes the Cynic, was *ὁψιμαθής*.\* He took nothing away with him from his residence at Magdalen Hall, Oxford, except a dislike of the Puritans, who were strongly represented owing to the influence of Dr. John Wilkinson, and a contempt for academic learning, which came out strongly in the controversies of his later life. He was forty years of age before he ever saw the 'Elements' of Euclid; he was close on fifty before he became a philosopher. Although it is true, as Professor Robertson remarks in a recent monograph, that there are few thinkers who succeeded better than he did "in leaving not unsaid all that was in his mind," it is hardly fanciful to trace some of his mental peculiarities to this late acquisition of culture. Plato remarks in the 'Theætetus,' † in reference to the same Antisthenes, who came so late to Socrates, that it is characteristic of such minds to ignore all that they cannot grasp "with teeth and hands"; and there can be no doubt that a certain excess of the practical instinct and a decided coarseness of mental fibre, combined, it is true, with great penetrative insight, marked much of the speculations of Hobbes. Deficient in his own nature of sympathetic affection, he cannot conceive of the possibility of innate altruistic feeling in humanity at large; richly endowed with logical faculties, he would apply the most rigorous logic to the customs and conventionalities of mankind, and is unable to realize the value, for instance, of mixed political forms, or the expediency of disguising the form of sovereignty. For the same reason he probably

\* Plato, 'Soph.' 251, b.

† 'Theætet.' 155, e.



has the clearest mind and the least ambiguous style of all philosophers. Grant him his premisses, and the conclusion seems inevitable; if humanity is through and through reasonable, it looks as if it ought to adopt the standpoint of Hobbism. But then humanity is not wholly reasonable, but largely influenced by emotion and sentiment, and the groundwork on which the whole superstructure rests is only to be reached by the most wholesale elimination of complex sentiments, and the employment of abstract and unreal hypotheses. For the logic and the psychology of Hobbes depend on the fiction of a single individual devoid of all those relations to his fellows which actually constitute his individuality;\* just as his political philosophy depends on the fiction of a social contract, which could only be possible to men living in a realized society and not in a state of 'nature,' prior to such realization.

From 1608 to about 1637, we can trace a methodical advance in the mental culture of Hobbes. The impulses came mainly from foreign travel, for in all some twenty years were spent by Hobbes on the Continent. His first work, the translation of Thucydides, was published in 1628, though written some time previously, and his earliest ambition seems to have been directed towards scholarship, just as his later efforts, in rhyme, when he was quite an old man, were devoted to versions of Homer's 'Odyssey' and 'Iliad.' The more special intellectual training took place between the years 1628 and 1637. First came the discovery of the value of geometrical demonstration

\* 'De Corpore,' Part II.

in 1629, the story of which, as told by Aubrey,\* is too characteristic to be omitted. "He was forty years old before he looked on geometry, which happened accidentally. Being in a gentleman's library in —, Euclid's 'Elements' lay open, and it was the forty-seventh proposition, Lib. i. So he reads the proposition. 'By G—,' says he, 'this is impossible!' So he reads the demonstration, which referred him back to another, which he also read, *et sic deinceps*, that at last he was demonstratively convinced of that truth. This made him in love with geometry."

But it was not so much geometry in itself with which he fell in love, for no part of his theories was more successfully attacked by his contemporaries than his geometrical speculations, but the form of the reasoning and the manner of proof. As he says himself in his 'Life,' he was "*delectatus methodo illius, non tam ob theoremata illa quam ob artem ratiocinandi.*" The next and most decisive step was the application of the idea of motion to physics. He graphically narrates the influence of the idea on his mind in the '*Vita carmine expressa,*'—

"Ast ego perpetuo naturam cogito rerum  
 Seu rate, seu curru, sivè ferebar equo.  
 Et mihi visa quidem est toto res unica mundo  
 Vera, licet multis falsificata modis; \* \* \*  
 Phantasiæ, nostri soboles cerebri, nihil extra;  
 Partibus internis nil nisi Motus inest.  
 Hinc est quod physicam quisquis vult discere, motus  
 Quid possit, debet perdidicisse prius."

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\* 'Life,' p. 606.

It is thus that Hobbes advances through the idea of motion, aided by the geometrical form of reasoning, to the gradual evolution of a system of mechanical philosophy. Atoms and movement account for all the changing forms of the phenomenal world; they also explain sensation, and unlock the secrets of intellectual growth. From physics and psychology the next step is easy and natural to sociology. For Hobbes, like the earliest philosophers, and unlike the modern, understood philosophy to mean a systematic view of the universe and a consistent explanation of all its various departments. Thus he had a catholic purpose before his mind, to present in one picture the various provinces of human thought as interpreted in accordance with one method and traced in their origin to the same set of principles. That philosophy only means psychology and morals, or in the last resort metaphysics, is an idea slowly developed through the eighteenth century, owing to the victorious advances of science. At the end of 1637 Hobbes has a comprehensive plan for future labours. The system is to begin with a treatise 'De Corpore,' to continue with the subject 'De Homine,' and to find its consummation in 'De Cive.' Nature consists of 'bodies,' and bodies are either inanimate or animate, or again, organized aggregates of living men. The whole field is, however, to be traversed with the guiding clue of motion as acting on bodies, and according to the principles of mechanical atomism—a clue which is to distinguish for ever the modern philosophy from the misty logomachies of Aristotle and the Schoolmen. It is this masterly scheme

which was thrown out of proportion by the pressing circumstances of Hobbes's life. The Revolution and its necessities forced on the publication of the 'Leviathan,' and it was not till after fourteen years, when Hobbes was sixty-three, that the attempt was made to compose the 'De Corpore,' which was originally designed to be the foundation of the structure. His fame rests principally on the 'Leviathan,' but the main philosophical thought of Hobbes was the application of the idea of motion. Perhaps the 'Leviathan' itself owes the paradoxical character of some of its doctrines to the fact that the original perspective was lost in this transposition of the order of topics, and Hobbes, by becoming an advocate of absolute sovereignty, throws into shadow his ethical egoism and his mechanical materialism. His own principles, however stringent and arbitrary, suffered him apparently to live under the Protectorate with an easy conscience, and with greater freedom than he afterwards enjoyed in the time of the Restoration. His last years were equally disturbed by the antagonism of the High Church party, and the bitter controversies with the Savilian professor, Wallis.

The main points in Hobbes's political theory, as displayed in the 'Leviathan,' are so well known that no long recapitulation is necessary. The theory itself rests on a series of assumptions, each of which may be contested, and culminates in a principle of autocratic supremacy, which the development of peoples and the progressive teaching of history seem little likely to endorse. The



first assumption is the ante-social state, a state of nature which Hobbes asserts to be one of universal war, though Rousseau is equally positive in maintaining that it is a state of peace. The state of nature is one in which man, *minus* his historical qualities, has free play; and as the historical qualities are exactly those which constitute, so far as we have any means of knowing, man's essential nature, his ante-social period is one about which it is impossible to argue. Experience and the growth of reason (Hobbes, despite his sensationalism, is as firm a believer in the power of reason as if he had lived in the eighteenth century) bring home the manifold inconveniences of a condition of perpetual war, and suggest certain articles of peace, also called laws of nature. The result is a second assumption, the formation of a social contract, a famous theory, traces of which can be found in the early political speculation of the Greeks, and which, despite its absolutely unhistorical character, was extensively popular among Hobbes's successors. The theory can be disproved on lines of both *a posteriori* and *a priori* argument: *a posteriori*, for no records or evidences can be found of the existence of such a primitive contact, and even if it existed it would rapidly have been dissolved by such phenomena as migration of races and foreign conquests; *a priori*, because an hypothesis to be scientific must deal with causes and conditions which are capable of being reasoned about, and we have no right to postulate both the efficient agent and the productive agency, the cause and its method of working. A third assumption then

follows, that men, having formed a contract, created or elected an absolute power to secure the fulfilment of its conditions. Hobbes, it is true, sometimes speaks as if the sovereign could obtain his authority not only by institution but by acquisition.\* But his language as to the devolution of authority belongs more naturally to the former process than the latter. It is natural to suppose that if men give they can also take away. But such is not the view of Hobbes, who considers that such a transference of authority would be a violation of the original compact. Why, again, men having attained to such a pitch of rationality as to form contractual relations with one another, should then proceed to tie their hands and treat themselves as though they were no longer rational, but had to be violently coerced—why, in short, the sovereignty so formed should be absolute, Hobbes never properly explains. For the paradoxical character of his speculation centres in this, that while citizens have duties to one another, the sovereign has no duties towards them; they formed a contract with their fellow-men, but the monarch formed no contract at all. It is clear that in this Hobbes manifests too plainly his desire “to vindicate the absolute right of a *de facto* monarch;” † or, in other words, that the pressure of the revolution proved too much for the natural development of his thought. Locke and Rousseau, arguing from much the same premisses, drew a totally different conclusion. The ‘generation of the

\* ‘Leviathan,’ ii. 17, end.

† Cf. Green’s ‘Philosophical Works,’ vol. ii. p. 369.

Leviathan, or Mortal God,' is not quite so orderly and methodical as Hobbes desired to make it; it would rather appear that he is first assumed to exist, and then a highly imaginative account is given of his origin. It is clear, as Professor Green remarks, that the 'jus civile' cannot itself belong to the sovereign, who enables individuals to exercise it. The only right which can belong to the sovereign is the 'jus naturale' (defined 'Leviathan,' i. 14), consisting in the superiority of his power, and this right must be measured by the inability of the subjects to resist. If they *can* resist, the right has disappeared. Nor did Hobbes himself fail speedily to endorse this argument by returning to England from France when the Protectorate was established, and treating the triumph of 'the rebels' as an accomplished fact.

There are some passages in the 'Nicholas Papers,' recently published by the Camden Society, which curiously illustrate this rapid transition of Hobbes from monarchy to the Commonwealth. The 'Leviathan' was published in Paris, where Hobbes had resided for several years, early in 1651. Hobbes appears to have gone to the Hague to present a copy of his book to Charles II., which the King refused to accept. Upon this Sir Edward Nicholas wrote to Sir Edward Hyde—

"All honest men here who are lovers of monarchy are very glad that the K. hath at length banisht his court that father of atheists Mr. Hobbes, who it is said hath rendered all the Queen's court and very many of the D. of York's family atheists, and if he had been

suffered would have done his best to poison the K.'s court."

And shortly after—

"I hear Lord Percy is much concerned in the forbidding Hobbes to come to court, and says it was you and other episcopal men that were the cause of it. But I hear that Wat Montagu and other Papists (to the shame of the true Protestants) were the chief cause that that great atheist was sent away. And I may tell you some say that the Marq. of Ormonde was very slow in signifying the King's command to Hobbes to forbear coming to court, which I am confident is not true, though several persons affirm it."

Be this as it may, Hobbes, being thus pressed, returned to England, though it is inaccurate to say that he fled from the Hague, and he found in London a government quite as much to his taste and much more absolute than that of a fugitive sovereign. A month later Nicholas writes to Lord Hatton—

"Mr. Hobbes is in London, much caressed, as one that hath by his writings justified the reasonableness and righteousness of their arms and actions."

The ethical views of Hobbes are vitiated by assumptions and fallacies, as remarkable as those we have met with in his political theory. A fictitious appearance of clearness and logical rigour is gained by excluding from the scheme all but a few elementary principles, and by disregarding or refusing to admit complexity of constitutive elements. Man's actions, it is clear, are motived in countless different



ways; but Hobbes will only allow of a single motive. Will would appear to be something distinct from desire, or at least to have relations with desire so intricate as to require careful analysis to disentangle, but with Hobbes it is only "the last appetite in deliberating." There are, in the last resort, elements of character—a sphere of personality and consciousness—which do not appear to be exhausted by an enumeration of 'feelings,' and which are involved in what we mean by self-determination; but the psychology of Hobbes is too superficial to come in sight of them. The picture which Hobbes draws of humanity is indeed simple and easy to understand, either pathetic or ludicrous in its simplicity according to the tastes and predilections of the observer. All activity depends on endeavour, all endeavour is appetite, all appetite is for personal well-being. There is only a single motive in man, the desire for selfish gratification; the only meaning of good and evil is what a man desires or avoids in the furtherance of his pleasure; the only standard of judgment is the opinion of the egoist. In a luminous paragraph in the 'Leviathan' (i. 6) Hobbes lays the foundation of his ethics—so good an example of his manner of resolving a complex problem by refusing to see its complexity, that it is worth quoting and remembering:—

"Whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire, that is it which he for his part calleth *good*, and the object of his hate and aversion, *evil*; and of his contempt *vile* and *inconsiderable*. For these words of good, evil, and contemptible, are ever used with relation to the

person that useth them; there being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common rule of good and evil to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves."

The solution of the moral problem is so astounding in its simplicity that it almost takes away one's breath. The relativity of the standard and the singleness of the motive are the remarkable points in the theory, and serve to distinguish the system of Hobbes as that which we now call Egoistic Hedonism. Good is my pleasure, the only thing which makes me act is my desire for pleasure. I am the only judge of my own pleasure, therefore I am the only judge of good. There is at all events no obscurity in such a scheme, and it makes no excessive demands on men's capabilities. We are all so naturally moral, according to Hobbes, that it is doubtful whether any instruction or training is required. Certainly there is no room or possibility for the law of duty or a moral ideal.

But directly we begin to analyze the scheme we find that each step can be contested. Is there only a single motive for human activity, and is such a single motive self-love? Butler, in his 'Sermons on Human Nature,' pointed out that there were a certain set of activities which could only be called instinctive and irreflective, and which he called 'propensions.' These rested simply on the objects proposed in each case; hunger rested on food, curiosity rested on knowledge. It is only when the series of instinctive propensions were satisfied, that there could arise for the human being a

complex (and by no means simple) notion of self, as something for which he ought to work. Self-love clearly could not have been the earliest motive for activity, for its very existence depends on the prior existence of unreflective instinctive activities. It is true that when the notion of self has been formed, it appears to absorb the whole field, but this again leads to considerations which are fatal to Hobbes's scheme. Self-love is a complex of different feelings, because it is based on the satisfaction of widely different instincts. Some of these instincts are extra-regarding impulses, they tend towards our fellow-men, and are based on the fact that a man's single personality can only be defined in terms of his relations to others. Thus sympathy is an extra-regarding instinct, so too is the more active affection which we term benevolence, so too are all the social interests and aptitudes of humanity. It follows that much more is included in the notion of pleasure than egoistic gratification, and self-love itself is found to include certain affectionate, benevolent, philanthropic activities, the performance of which, however apparently altruistic, tends to heighten and vivify the consciousness of self. Thus, on all sides the scheme of Hobbes is found to be deficient in analysis, the picture drawn of humanity is discovered to be lacking in some of the prominent elements of nature. Man is not naturally an isolated and repellent atom; he is one element, one factor in a composite humanity. He can only be defined in relation to his fellows: he begins by having social instincts; he is, as Aristotle said, *πολιτικὸν ζῶον*. It is

the caricature of analysis to resolve pity and benevolence into selfishness; to define the first as the pain arising from the consideration that what has happened to another man may also happen to oneself, and to explain the second as the fear that we also may suffer. This is not logical simplicity but psychological inanity.

We must not, however, through detestation of the ethical results, blind ourselves to the historical value of Hobbes's psychology. It was vitiated by the gravest errors: it was based on the original fiction of a single individual who could be treated as though his nature was independent of his relations to his fellows; it rested on a mechanical and materialistic theory which could not but be fatal to the higher aspects of character. But though this may be the condemnation from an absolute standpoint, the relative standpoint will do justice to Hobbes. History tells us that individualism was in the air, and that a mechanical philosophy was the heritage from Bacon, as well as the product of the best contemporary intelligence on the Continent. The merit of Hobbes is that he in reality began that study of psychology which was the distinguishing mark of the line of English thinkers which succeeded him. He rendered Locke possible, who in turn led the way for Berkeley and Hume. From this point of view the judgment of Professor Croom Robertson may be thoroughly endorsed. "Hobbes signalized the fact of sense—or phenomenal experience—as itself a phenomenon to be accounted for in the way of science; and though the fact of subjective representation may not thus have its philo-



sophical import exhausted, nor is well coupled with the particular facts of physics, to recognize it as such a matter of inquiry is a very notable step. It is to proclaim that there is room and need for a science of psychology as well as of physics—that mind can be investigated by the same method and under like conditions as nature. Such a conception of psychological science has steadily made way in later times, and to Hobbes belongs the credit as early as any other, and more distinctly than any other, of having opened its path.”\*

A consideration of this physiological treatment of sensation will lead us on to the general bases of Hobbes's philosophy. We have before remarked that Hobbes is a rationalist; he is so, however, only so far as rationalism was not yet clearly distinguished in the progress of controversy from sensationalism. He believes, for instance, that the difference between science and experience is one mainly of reason; and that in similar fashion we distinguish between reason and custom in politics, and reason and faith in theology. Yet all knowledge originates with sense, and all knowledge is only sense transformed. We pass beyond sense-experience by means which are still sensible, for the connecting bridge is found in language and the use of names. Thus the functions of sense are all-important for Hobbes, and its explanation one of the chief

\* Robertson's 'Hobbes,' p. 124. (Blackwood's 'Philosophical Classics,' 1886.) Professor Robertson is also the author of the excellent article on Hobbes in the ninth edition of the 'Encyclopædia Britannica.'

duties of the philosopher. What, then, is sensation? It is essentially 'movement.' The motion in external particles is taken on by means of the nerves to the heart, and there is an answering movement or reaction from the internal organ. This reaction accounts for the fact that we refer our sensations outwards, and that they become for us the qualities of external bodies. We observe, on the one hand, that the whole explanation is physiological and mechanical; on the other hand, that it is based on that idea of motion which, as we know, so powerfully impressed the imagination of Hobbes. There is, further, the necessary deduction that sense is mere seeming,  $\tau\acute{o}\ \delta\omicron\kappa\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$ , for it is only due to the mechanical interaction between external bodies and the living organism. We cannot argue from sensation in us to an actually objective quality in the body outside us; we cannot say, for instance, that sugar *is* sweet (as though sweetness was an objective ingredient of the external body, sugar), but only that *we* have a sensation of sweetness. What is real is the movement of particles from outside to inside, and the answering movement from inside to outside. What is unreal is the subjective feeling, if it be taken, not as merely subjective, but as an objective quality.

Difficulties, however, remain. If sense be seeming, how can we be sure even of this motion of particles, which is declared to be real? For our perception of motion is, after all, sensation, and may be the subjective presentation of facts, which in their objective import are quite different. Again, motion is only realized by us by means of

time, and time is by Hobbes himself, in the 'De Corpore,' declared to be a subjective phenomenon. Curiously enough, he attempts to derive time from motion. But he has to add that it stands rather for the fact of succession, or before-and-after in motion; which means that it is a prior fact of consciousness involved in the perception of motion rather than in any way explicable from motion as an objective occurrence.\* Further, if sensation be seeming, and all sensible qualities only states of consciousness, how can we be sure, in default of any mental function superior to sense, of matter and particles—in a word, of an objective world? And if we are not sure, what becomes of scientific materialism and the mechanical philosophy? Thus Hobbes's system would end in scepticism.

From another point of view, it requires to be explained by a deeper psychology. Hobbes notices that the distinctive mark of the human body amongst other bodies is that it knows that it knows; in other words, that, besides sensation, there is also the consciousness of sensation. "In seeking for the cause of sense, he sees the need of some other 'sense' to take note of sense by."† He tries to supply this need by bringing forward the phenomenon of memory. But this is at most only a substitute for an explanation, for the possibility of memory itself requires to be explained. How is it possible for a number of series of states of consciousness to be so far aware of themselves as a number or series, that they can remember any one or all? Is it

\* Robertson's 'Hobbes,' p. 97.

† *Ibid.*, p. 124.

possible, unless there be something higher than such states, or at all events, some golden thread running through them and holding them all together? If so, what shall we call this synthetic capacity? Shall we call it reason, or spirit, or soul, or the self? Whatever it be, the fact of its existence renders a purely sensationalistic psychology for ever impossible. For it cannot in its turn be deduced from sensation, but makes sensation possible. It is that which both knows and feels, and makes us aware of an external world.

Here, however, we are anticipating a more modern metaphysics, and taking a different view of philosophy from that which Hobbes took. In his account of ultimate principles he clearly states his own view. Although powerfully influenced by Descartes, he is untouched by that deeper consideration of philosophical problems which Descartes describes in his 'Discours' and his 'Méditations,' and he is either quite unaware of, or discards, that ultimate basis of all reality, which took for the French thinker the form of "Je pense, donc je suis." According to Hobbes, philosophy is ratiocination, and ratiocination is, in reality, reckoning, or adding and subtracting. It is computation in the largest sense, deducing effects from causes, and inferring causes from effects. Only on one assumption is this possible. Philosophy must deal only with phenomena. It is not, so Hobbes tells us, of that kind which makes philosopher's stones, or is found in the metaphysic codes, but merely "the natural reason of man busily flying up and down among the creatures, and bringing back a true



report of their order, causes, and effects." This being so, we can make a clean sweep of certain ultimate questions. We need not ask what God is, for He is not a phenomenon, and has no generation. Nor need we trouble ourselves about spirits, for they have no phenomenal aspects, nor are we concerned with matters of faith. The rest of the items of a properly scientific creed, such as we are familiar with in modern times, follow in due order. Causes can only be efficient and material. Formal causes and final causes are nonsense. The soul of man is not otherwise than corporeal; ghosts and spirits, as spoken of in ordinary language, are but dream-images and purely phantasmal. And man is not a free agent; there is no such thing as freedom of the will. Man himself is not a spiritual ego, but a natural 'body' whose sensations, impulses, volitions, and emotions are alike explicable by motions of particles. In all this, Hobbes is from one point of view an ancient, from another point of view a very modern, thinker. Ancient, because he makes mind depend on matter, which, after Berkeley and Kant, should be impossible for a philosopher; but also modern, because language such as his is almost identical with that of contemporary systems of 'naturalism' and the facile framers of 'mental and moral science.' Perhaps, hard driven by the mechanical philosophers and the modern Hobbists, we may be content to remark, in the last resort, with Lotze, how universal is the extent, and yet how completely subordinate is the significance of the mission which mechanism has to fulfil in the structure of the world. For the

world of forms is one thing, and the world of values is another.\*

Hobbes's views on religion are too characteristic to be altogether omitted, although naturally they impressed his contemporaries more than they influenced succeeding thought. Hobbes's general position as a phenomenalist did not, as we have already seen, allow him much room for a treatment of super-sensual verities. "All the arguing of infinities," he impatiently remarks, "is but the ambition of schoolboys." But in his theory of human nature he has to allow a certain seed of religion as a factor, often troublesome, but ineradicable, with which both philosopher and statesman have to deal. It is this which, in the methodical form of intellectual inquisitiveness, leads men to form a conception of God as the first and eternal cause of all things; but is equally productive, owing to men's fears and fancies, of all kinds of vain and foolish imaginings. Images of dreams are projected outwards and become spiritual and supernatural agents, and there is no more curious chapter in the 'Leviathan' than that in which Hobbes describes with exuberance of detail the mischievous delusions of 'the Gentiles.'† In order to correct such superstition, Hobbes bestows special care on a review of what is really meant by such things as spirits, angels, prophets, miracles, eternal life, hell, and salvation, though at times the reader cannot help entertaining some doubt as to Hobbes's seriousness. A more marvellous exegesis

\* Cf. Lotze, 'Microcosmus,' Introduction.

† Cf. 'Leviathan,' part iv. 45.

of Scripture than that which is attempted in the third part of the 'Leviathan' was probably never penned, and its critics and opponents might well exclaim with Antonio :

" Mark you this, Bassanio,  
The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose."

Two points, however, stand out with distinctness. In the first place, there can be no doubt that Hobbes recognizes that there is "a core of mystery in religion which faith only and not reason can touch." He treats it indeed with coarse humour, when he says that "it is with the mysteries of religion as with wholesome pills for the sick ; which swallowed whole have the virtue to cure ; but chewed, are for the most part cast up again without effect." \* But as Professor Robertson remarks, the idea is so distinctive of English thought, from William of Occam through Bacon to Locke, that there can be no reasonable doubt that to Hobbes too "the core of mystery" remains. In the second place, Hobbes is persuaded that the whole department of religious thought should be under the control of the State. This is his chief contest with the Episcopalians of his time, and is the motive of his attack on the Papacy as a spiritual ' Kingdom of Darkness.' He has seen how great was the evil of religious dissension, and how fatal its power in dissolving the fabric of the Commonwealth : the only alternative to the supremacy of the Church was the autocratic power of the sovereign, who ought to be priest as well as king. How is the sovereign to get his laws obeyed if there is a rival power

\* Cf. ' Leviathan,' part iii. c. 32.

dividing his subjects' allegiance? Unless the State control the religious life, there will be a chance for the Papacy, and civil obedience will be at an end. Moreover, there is only one thing necessary for salvation, which is the confession that Jesus is the Christ; a dogma which ought to be kept free from all the surrounding scaffolding of ecclesiastical dogma invented by the Church doctors or largely borrowed from pagan philosophy.

The later years of Hobbes's life exhibit the aged philosopher as engaged in ceaseless conflicts with outraged divines or incensed mathematicians, but do not throw any fresh light on the nature of his thought. His weakest side was his geometrical speculation, and it was that which he defended with the stoutest obstinacy against the superior knowledge of Ward, and Wilkins, and Wallis. So remarkable a figure as his was the natural butt of all those who were concerned with defending the older philosophy, or were outraged by his notorious secularism. In personal characteristics perhaps as unamiable a man as ever lived, devoid of sympathetic affection, untouched by the higher graces of character, intensely and narrowly practical, and of great personal timidity, he yet, in virtue of a comprehensive intellect, and an analytic power of uncommon keenness and edge, succeeded in leaving a conspicuous mark on the history not only of English, but of Continental thought. He accepts the practical scientific problem from Bacon, and hands on the psychological problem to Locke. He may almost be said to have originated moral philosophy in England, or at all events



to have inspired, either by antagonism or direct influence, its most characteristic efforts and doctrines. In direct influence he lives again in much of the utilitarianism of Hume, Hartley, Bentham, Paley, and the elder and younger Mill; his characteristic selfishness is reproduced on a wider scale in the universalistic hedonism of eighteenth and nineteenth century speculation. Antagonism to his position diverged in two directions: on the one hand, it produced the rationalism of the Cambridge Platonists—Henry More and Ralph Cudworth; on the other, through Shaftesbury, it led to the moral-sense doctrines of Hutcheson. Indeed, the whole of the next two centuries was occupied in one way or another with Hobbes, and if any system can be called epoch-making, there is none which deserves the title better than his. Philosophy, as we now understand the term, is not perhaps so much indebted to him as to Descartes, from whom sprang the line of catholic thinkers, among whom occur the illustrious names of Spinoza, and Leibnitz, and Kant. But Hobbes did more than any one, with the possible exception of Bacon, to direct English thought into its characteristic channels, and to put before it its especial problems. Its precision, its clearness, its narrowness, its scientific tendency, its practical character—all are there. In Hobbes are represented in embryo the specific developments which we meet with in Locke and Berkeley, Hume and Mill. His countrymen may well be proud of one who concentrates in his single personality their most characteristic defects and excellences. Add to this the merits of an admirable

style, and we have the picture, not only of a thinker, but also of a writer and a man of letters. Above all others he succeeds in marrying words to thought, and lights up the most abstruse exposition with the brightest gleams of wit and fancy. “*Vir probus et fama eruditionis domi forisque bene cognitus*” is the simple inscription which designates his resting-place in Hault Hucknall. Perhaps a happier text for his grave was suggested by the humour of one of his friends during his lifetime, “This is the true Philosopher’s Stone.”

## STUDIES IN THE PROPHETIC NATURE.

### CARLYLE'S POLITICAL DOCTRINES.

WHEN the inner history of a nation comes to be written it is a difficult yet necessary task to estimate, among the forces which have moulded its progress, the character and influence of Prophets. The records of most nations are adorned with the names of men of truly prophetic nature, interpreters of strange, rare thoughts, revealers of sudden and unlooked-for depths in human personality, *sacri vates*, who have cast new lights on the meaning of their times, and lifted up their voices in earnest denunciation or solemn warning. It is not indeed easy to probe such men, or weigh them in the critical balances; for it is the essence of their character to escape the logical dissecting-knife, and to triumph over ingenious analysis. Yet they all have much the same traits—a certain intolerance of their immediate surroundings, a certain visionariness of speculation, a retrograde and reactionary impulse, a generous weariness as of those born out of due time. A Plato, in the Greek world, framing ideal aristocracies at a time when matters were ripe for a Macedonian despot; a Mahomet talking of the one God, when the Koreish,

keepers of the Caabah, and all the official superintendents of the Idols were powerful in the land; a Dante with his mystic visions and bitter indignation against the Florentine magistrates; a Ruskin with all his grand devotion to earnestness and moral purpose in Art—names such as these flash out here and there in the annals of most nationalities. They are terrible talkers, with a magnificent power of oratory and affluence of style, sometimes beating their wings against the bars of Destiny, and losing the self-mastery and control of genius in wild rhapsody and passionate rhetoric. And the irony of history generally puts them in contrast with some small, practical men of the world, who cannot understand their fervour and are inclined to laugh at their enthusiasms. Plato expounding his ideal polity before an astonished Dionysius of Syracuse, or Mahomet bursting into tears before his good, sensible uncle, Abu Thaleb, who begged him the while to be quiet, or Dante at the court of Della Scala without power to be merry or to amuse, undoubtedly appeared strange, half-insane characters to their audience: just as Ruskin, brought to the æsthetic bar for his manifold sins against High Art by Mr. Poynter,\* is a spectacle which we know not whether to call sad or laughable. History is full of such contrasts.

It will not be easy for the future historian of our time to put Carlyle into right perspective in a picture of the modern age. For he, too, is undoubtedly a Prophet in

\* 'Ten Lectures on Art,' by E. J. Poynter, 1879. See also 'Edinburgh Review,' Jan. 1888.



the sense which has been described ; he has the same kind of reactionary ardour, the same keen vision into the heart of things, the same apparent unintelligibility. He lays the historian under the same obligation to discover his real effect and influence, to find the underlying tendency, among much admirable yet unnecessary verbiage. His true biographer will have the difficult task to weigh the exact value of that which, because it appeals to the imagination rather than to the judgment, is precisely the most imponderable quality that can be conceived. And perhaps his hardest toil will be expended over the practical, rather than the theoretical and ethical sides of Carlyle's philosophy, to see what issue in the shape of definite political theory came of all the study of German metaphysics, and the openly professed hatred of things as they are, which characterize the unique personality of the English Idealist.

The influence of the thoughts of Carlyle over the modern intelligence already threatens to be an evanescent one. Whether this be accepted by utilitarians as the best criticism on the pretensions of the system, or whether it be capable of an historical explanation, the fact remains, that the young men, for instance, in our universities, are not in the habit of reading Carlyle in the present day with a tithe of the same fervour which he excited among the generation which preceded them. The case stands with him very much as it does with Coleridge. At a time when English philosophy was, if remarkable for anything, chiefly remarkable for a sort of sublimated

common-sense, it was a striking and paradoxical thing that Coleridge and Carlyle should so highly extol the German philosophy in comparison with that of native growth. But one of the latest phases of thought in England is the recrudescence of Kant and the Germans; and whether by means of a translation or manifold commentaries, the modern philosophical student can quote his *Critique of Pure Reason*, or enunciate his fervid belief in the Identity of Being and not-Being, with a facile versatility quite unknown to his English forefather. Thus Othello's occupation's gone: the so-called Hegelian school now takes the place once filled by Coleridge and Carlyle; and Idealism, learnt in Königsberg and Jena, is substituted for that imitation of an imitation, which was professed by the admirers of Herr Teufelsdröckh in the first half of the present century. Yet, though our Idealism be not precisely the Idealism of Carlyle, "it is not right to lay hands on our father Parmenides." The time has hardly yet come for our modern Idealists, after the reform of our philosophy, to proceed to reform our political theories also. Meanwhile it may not be unprofitable to see what were the deductions in the sphere of politics, which seemed to the mind of Carlyle to flow from the position which he assumed in philosophy; for, since they appear to follow with considerable consistency from his logical assumptions, it may yet be in the power of some student fond of rash generalizations, to state that the present autocracy in Germany is not a little due to the speculations of Kant and Hegel.

The sequence of thought in Carlyle's 'Chartism' and 'Latter-Day Pamphlets' has, as the first link in the chain, some one of his philosophical essays, for instance, the essay on Novalis. The year in which 'Novalis' was published is 1829, the year of the production of 'Signs of the Times,' in which an Age of Mechanism is portrayed in all its ugly colours, and the necessity is enforced of some Dynamics in our treatment of social phenomena. To understand Novalis, says Carlyle, it is necessary to understand Fichte, Kantism, and German metaphysics generally. The points which strike him in German philosophy are, briefly, its views on the subject of Matter, its transcendental character, its ascent beyond the region of the senses, its criticism on the limited functions of the Understanding, and its belief in the majesty of Reason. For the profound and vital distinction between Reason and Understanding, drawn by German thinkers, was wholly new to the English intelligence, which was in the habit of confounding the two in the general intellectual faculties of man. That Understanding had a limited function, that it was bound by what Kant called its Categories, while it was the essence of Reason to soar beyond the limitations of the Understanding, to comprehend or seek to comprehend the Absolute, the Whole, rather than the Relative and the Partial,—these were hard sayings for English ears, whether uttered by a Coleridge or a Carlyle. If accepted, they might help to solve some of the difficulties of Theology, to soften the hard lines of a scientific treatment of man and the universe, as well as to cast new

lights on some of the controverted problems of psychology. Even in the sphere of politics, they might admit of some forcible deductions. For the political counterpart of a metaphysical majesty of Reason was a powerful, autocratic Government; which, composed of the best and wisest of the population, should govern the nation, responsible only to itself. It too, like Reason in its relations with the Understanding, might arrange, to the peace and satisfaction of all, the limited and partial antagonisms of different classes and social interests. Such, at all events, was the deduction of Carlyle, as indeed it, or something like it, had been the conclusion of the Idealist Plato many ages before. Democracy is the ideal polity of an analytic and equalizing science; but the metaphysical ideal is an Aristocracy, sage, autocratic and irresponsible, an Aristocracy which should not be confined to birth, but be the sacred privilege of worth, in whatever class worth may be found. In the social speculations of Carlyle, it is not therefore surprising to find that the prominent idea is a Rule of Real Rulers—added to which is found the so-called Gospel of Work. For Work is the only criterion of Worth, while Worth is the one indispensable characteristic of the Real Ruler.

There is no want of iteration in Carlyle's treatment of both of these theses. If the reader takes up the Essays on 'Chartism,' he will see the Gospel of Labour expounded on every other page. If he studies the 'Latter-Day Pamphlets,' the necessity of some powerful government is found to be the one panacea for all the woes of England.



“Work is the mission of man on this earth. A day is ever struggling forward, a day will arrive in some approximate degree, when he who has no work to do, by whatever name he may be named, will not find it good to show himself in our quarter of the solar system, but may go and look out elsewhere if there be any *idle* planet discoverable.” \* There is so much truth in this doctrine that one may well be pardoned for asking whether it has not been pressed to an one-sided extreme. The Gospel of Labour is, indeed, common to all prophets; as much the doctrine of Ruskin as of Carlyle. And yet, when one looks at the present condition of England in this day, with all its manifold activities and commercial labours, when one sees men everywhere toiling to raise themselves from the hopeless ruck of the average, eating the bread of carefulness with the one view of becoming richer than their neighbours, it may well be doubted whether, except as preached to landed proprietors, it is a Gospel at all. What is to be the ultimate test of a man's value in this world—what he has made *for himself* or what he has made *himself*? The essential graces of human character—a man's nobleness and culture and purity and self-control—are these all to be sacrificed to his powers of endurance? The mere suggestion of the necessity of self-culture is often regarded as a dangerously selfish, hedonistic doctrine. If the tendency of commercial

\* ‘Chartism,’ Essays, vol. v. p. 342. (Carlyle's collected works, library edition, in thirty volumes. Chapman and Hall, 1869. My references throughout are to this edition.) Cf. too ‘Past and Present,’ vol. xiii. p. 196.

England be to obliterate it, this is enough to prove that quite as true a Gospel may be found in the recommendation to make some pause in the ceaseless whirl of unrest, lest a man's personality be wholly swept away. If this be Epicureanism, then Epicurus has some message to the present generation as well as Zeno.

But there are many passages in Carlyle which limit the application of the Gospel of Labour; and it is unfair to visit upon the original preacher the conclusions and deductions of over zealous disciples.\* The other doctrine is one of far greater importance in Carlyle, and one which is of peculiar interest in the contemporary state of politics in England. That the government of England is in the hands of Rulers that are no Rulers; that the result is Chartism and other anarchical outbreaks; and that the one remedy is to be found in a real aristocracy, not of privilege but of fact—this is the central dogma of Carlyle's politics. It runs through all his 'Lectures on Heroes'; it finds expression in the wish for "Dynamical Forces in society," in the 'Signs of the Times'; it is repeated again and again in 'Past and Present'; and it forms the dominant keynote in the 'Latter-Day Pamphlets.' Here is one out of many enunciations of the doctrine, where Carlyle puts a speech to the Proletariate in the mouth of an ideal Prime Minister.† "Industrial Colonels, Workmasters, Task-

\* As *e.g.* Mr. Froude, 'Siding at a Railway Station,' 'Fraser's Magazine' (November, 1879).

† 'Latter-Day Pamphlets' (vol. xix.), p. 52. Perhaps a better expression is to be found at the beginning of the sixth lecture on Heroes and Hero-Worship.



masters, Life-Commanders, equitable as Rhadamanthus, and inflexible as he; such, I perceive, you do need; and such, you being once put under law as soldiers are, will be discoverable for you. I perceive with boundless alarm, that I shall have to set about discovering such,—since I am at the top of affairs, with all men looking at me. Alas, it is my new task in this new Era; and God knows, I too little other than a red-tape Talking Machine and unhappy bag of Parliamentary Eloquence hitherto, am far behind with it! But street barricades rise everywhere; the hour of fate has come.” In contrast with this, Carlyle thus delivers himself on such Rulers as we do possess\* —“Till the time of James the First, I find that real heroic merit more or less was actually the origin of peerages; never till towards the end of that bad reign were peerages bargained for, or bestowed on men palpably of no worth except their money or connection. But the evil practice, once begun, spread rapidly, and now the Peerage-book is what we see—a thing miraculous in the other extreme. Our menagerie of live peers in Parliament is like that of our Brazen Statues in the market-place; the selection seemingly is made much in the same way and with the same degree of felicity and successful accuracy in choice. Our one steady regulated supply is the class definable as Supreme Stump-Orators in the Lawyer department: the class called Chancellor flows by something like fixed conduits towards the Peerage; the rest, like our Brazen Statues, come by popular rule of thumb.”

\* ‘Latter-Day Pamphlets’ (vol. xix.), p. 341.

• It has been already observed that this doctrine of Real Rulers is the proper political outcome of an idealistic philosophy, which demands that Government should be the outward and visible form of the inward spirit of wisdom and reason—a demand which is best satisfied by an Aristocracy or an Oligarchy. It involves the fierce dislike of Democracy and Popular Suffrage, which runs through all Carlyle's writings, and is synonymous with the belief in the virtues of Hero-Worship. It is curiously connected also with an ignorance or dislike of physiological and sociological laws—a truly Idealistic trait—which finds one expression in the essay termed 'Shooting Niagara, and After,' published as late as 1876.\* For the Hero in Carlyle is a wholly exceptional and fortuitous personage, whose origin and cast of thought can be in no way explained by reference to the laws of heredity or the general contemporaneous condition of society. He is with us one moment and gone the next; "no man can tell whence he cometh or whither he goeth." On what does the Hero's influence depend? It has ultimately to be resolved into superiority of material force; and hence a Napoleon must be included in the ranks, with whatever damage to morality may thence ensue. Cæsar, in the later times of the Roman Republic, would be a Real Ruler after Carlyle's own heart, as, indeed, he is represented by his latest biographer, Mr. Froude. Even Cromwell, one of the prime favourites of Carlyle, found that no other solution of the parliamentary problem was possible except the dissolution of

\* 'Shooting Niagara,' &c. 'Essays,' vol. vi. p. 387.

parliament after parliament in the later years of his life. Experience tells us that a power of this sort is divided by a thin and wavering line from a despotism and tyranny, which themselves provoke dangerous reactions. Even "an Anarchy *plus* a Street Constable," or "a Chaos with Ballot Boxes" is better than that. A free development of a nation's resources, even though conducted by universal suffrage and a democratic organization, offers greater guarantees of stability and order than the Hero full-blown into "a Saviour of Society."

A strange irony of fate has ordained that the one statesman in our day who has attempted to give application to doctrines similar to those of Carlyle should be Lord Beaconsfield; indeed, for purposes of instructive comparison, 'Sybil' should be read side by side with 'Chartism,' and 'Coningsby' with 'Latter-Day Pamphlets.' In both writers there is much the same view of the only social panacea, if we leave subordinate considerations aside and look at the main issue. There is the same view of the anarchy into which England was thrown by the Reform Bill of 1832; there is the same belief in the saving power of a new Aristocracy; there is the same radical distrust of Parliament. If we make all due deduction for the differences of style, the following passage from 'Sybil' might have had Carlyle as its author:—"The House of Parliament has been irremediably degraded into the decaying position of a mere court of registry, possessing great privileges on condition that it never exercises them; while the other Chamber, that at the first blush, and to the

superficial, exhibits symptoms of almost unnatural vitality, assumes on a more studious inspection, somewhat of the character of a select vestry, fulfilling municipal rather than imperial offices.—The Reform Act has not furnished us with abler administrators or a more illustrious Senate.” That is quite in the tone of the ‘Latter-Day Pamphlets,’ which were published in 1850, while ‘Sybil’ was written in 1845. There is, of course, more plausibility, more sonorous superficiality about Lord Beaconsfield’s treatment of Chartism. ‘Sybil’ is full of such sentences as that “the mind of England is with the people,” and “the future principle of English politics will seek to ensure equality, not by levelling the Few, but by elevating the Many.” There is more of that appearance of sympathy with the lowest orders of the State, which one who would unite the rising nobility with the People, and be himself an old Tory and a Demagogue by turns, must of necessity adopt. Yet even in the dislike of Politics to which Carlyle sometimes gives expression (*e.g.* “well withdrawn from the raging inanities of politics,” ‘Shooting Niagara,’ p. 381) there is a curious echo of Coningsby’s advice to Vere to hold himself aloof from political parties which are only factions. And when we turn from the novelist to the Prime Minister, when we think of all the history of Lord Beaconsfield, with his systematic disregard for Parliament, his high-handedness, his real rule over his Cabinet, and survey the picture of the one aged statesman who was a bulwark for England against “a despotism ending in a democracy, or a democracy ending in a despotism,” it



looks almost like the parody and caricature of Carlyle's earnest convictions of England's necessity for Heroes. This is the man whom Carlyle in 'Shooting Niagara' called "that clever, conscious juggler whom they call Dizzy," "a superlative Hebrew conjuror," and other choice epithets. Truly the whirligig of Time brings round its revenges.

The courses of modern history have, in truth, taught us to be on our guard against hero-statesmen. It is with them as with the Greek tyrants of old, that, borne into power by a great wave of popular feeling, their subsequent efforts are often directed to repress the national energies to which they owed their rise.\* We can hardly help thinking of a Prince Bismarck—who in many points resembles a Carlylese Hero—with his autocracy, his cynical indifference, his parliamentary gagging bills, his protective policies. The alliance between Germany and Austria † is just such a stroke of policy as a "Real Ruler" delights in, as may be seen from the fulsome adulation of it in the mouth of that modern Elizabethan minister, Lord Salisbury. It is just such a stroke of policy also as indefinitely postpones the democratic combination of nations, and is, sooner or later, a severe blow to the democratic ideal of Commerce and Peace. It is no good news of great joy to France, at all events, who is immediately threatened; nor yet to Russia, who is driven to seek fresh allies; nor yet to Austria herself, who may possibly

\* Mr. Gladstone's career conveys different lessons on which in his lifetime it is not wise to enlarge.

† Written in 1879.



find the fate of the earthenware pot floating with the vessel of brass; nor yet to England, above all, who is tossed like a shuttlecock from her old connections with France to a combination with despotic empires, and whose commercial expansion may be severely impaired by protective Bismarckian policies. The last point has a peculiar importance in this reference, for it discloses a manifestly weak spot in Carlyle's Real Rulers. They are, in his language, to be Industrial Captains. Modern experience tends to show that whatever else a real ruler may be, he will not be an Industrial Captain. How can he be? The real ruler of Carlyle is a man who laughs to scorn Political Economy and McCroudie's and other Professors of the Dismal Science; in practice, therefore, he must hold such an industrial principle as Free Trade with a singularly weak, vacillating, impotent grasp. Industrial Captain? Nay, rather a Protectionist, as befits a man of strong intuitive dislike of democratic forces—an advocate of Reciprocity, such as, hesitatingly, timidly, with many an anxious look backward and forward, some of our Conservative Ministers seem promising to be.

Possibly we should look for our statesman-hero not in England or Germany, but in France. Gambetta appeared at one time perhaps the sincerest first minister of a democracy whom we have had since the time of Pericles. He was the veritable *enfant de la République*, borne on a great democratic wave to supreme power, the champion of France when she was crushed inwardly by the deadening influence of the Napoleonic dynasty, and crushed outwardly by the

overmastering mechanical superiority of the German army. He always believed in the republican instincts of France, and she rewarded him by making him the chief depositary of her power. He was a genuine child of the modern age, though it is doubtful whether the future will reserve a niche in her temple for his honour. Yet Liberalism in France in his days wore a strange air. What is the Ideal of Liberalism? Freedom, assuredly, that every man should have personal freedom from tyranny in his thoughts, his opinions, and his form of faith. Was the Jules Ferry Bill conceived in the Liberal spirit? Is Liberalism also to persecute? It may be said, indeed, that if Liberalism is to be triumphant, it must be organized and it must be scientific; and science in the hands of a Paul Bert naturally hated Jesuitism, and organization in the hands of a Gambetta meant a certain individual repression. And yet English Liberalism giving academic rights to Roman Catholicism, and French Liberalism putting down Jesuitism with a strong hand, form a curious and striking contrast.

It is characteristic of all great men of prophetic nature that we should have to fix their position rather negatively than positively, more by their dislikes than by their likings. Certainly in Carlyle's case the record of his dislikes forms a long series of indictments. There is his dislike of Parliament, his dislike of Statistics, his dislike of Political Economy, his dislike of Parliamentary Radicalism, his dislike of Popular Oratory, his dislike of Philanthropy towards criminals, his dislike, keenest and fiercest

of all, of Democracy and Universal Suffrage.\* We have left ourselves but little space to refer to all these. But it is the less necessary to investigate the details of Carlyle's criticisms, inasmuch as they all flow from the central doctrine which we have been examining. Given the rule of genuine leaders, and the very conditions of their appointment require them to resist all those cherished charters of popular liberty, to which a Democracy or a Republic look for their ultimate establishment.

A growing disbelief in the efficiency of Parliaments is common to many theoretic politicians, who are by no means agreed on other points. We have already found it both as a theoretical and practical principle in the case of Lord Beaconsfield; and Mr. Kebbel once pointed out† that even Mr. Gladstone has given expression to discontent in this matter. It is not difficult to understand how such a feeling has grown. Every year sees the House with

\* The following are some passages on these points, taken from 'Chartism' (Essays, vol. v.), 'Latter-Day Pamphlets' (vol. xix.), 'Shooting Niagara, and After' (Essays, vol. vi.), 'Past and Present' (vol. xiii.).

PARLIAMENTS.—'Chartism,' pp. 328-9, 381-2, 395-6; 'Latter-Day Pamphlets,' 113, 134-5, 237-40, 273; 'Shooting Niagara,' 347, 389. STATISTICS.—'Chartism,' 332-337. POLITICAL ECONOMY.—'Chartism,' 383, 409; 'Latter-Day Pamphlets,' 53-4, 182. PARLIAMENTARY RADICALISM.—'Chartism,' 404-5. POPULAR ORATORY.—'Latter-Day Pamphlets,' 209-256. PHILANTHROPY.—'Latter-Day Pamphlets,' 60, 61, 73-79, 82, 92-94. DEMOCRACY.—'Chartism,' 371-373; 'Latter-Day Pamphlets,' 18-29, 144, 158, 320-330; 'Past and Present,' 269-274.

† 'Nineteenth Century,' September, 1879.

more work to do and less ability to get through it. Every year sees the *personnel* of Parliament steadily declining, and the benches filled with what Lord Sherbrooke once called a ploutocracy and gerontocracy, and what more modern critics would call an ochlocracy, to the exclusion of more intellectual elements. And when to this we have to add that such multiform activities in matters of expenditure, of legislation, of foreign, domestic, and colonial policy, are subject to total interruption and obstruction by the fanaticism of individual members, it can be readily understood that dissatisfaction with the great Council of the Realm should be both felt and expressed. But it is one thing to reform and quite another thing to abrogate. Let us listen to the drastic remedies of Carlyle: "What England wants and will require to have, or sink in nameless anarchies, is not a Reformed Parliament—but a Reformed Executive, or Sovereign Body of Rulers and Administrators. Not a better Talking-Apparatus, the best conceivable 'Talking-Apparatus would do very little for us at present;—but an infinitely better Acting-Apparatus, the benefits of which would be invaluable now and henceforth. The practical question puts itself with ever-increasing stringency to all English minds; can we by no industry, energy, utmost expenditure of human ingenuity and passionate invocation of the Heavens and the Earth, get to attain some twelve or ten or six men to manage the affairs of the nation in Downing Street, and the chief posts elsewhere, who are abler for the work than those we have been used to this



long while?"\* The remedy proposed, then, is not a reform of Parliament, but a great extension of power in Downing Street. And he makes an explicit proposal: "The proposal is in short that the Queen shall have power of nominating the half-dozen or half-score officers of the Administration, whose presence is thought necessary in Parliament, to official seats there, without reference to any constituency but her own only, which of course will mean her Prime Minister's. The soul of the project is that the Crown also have power to elect a few members to Parliament."†

This is the point in which Carlyle comes nearest to Bolingbroke and farthest from the position of Burke. The desire of Bolingbroke in his 'Patriot King' was to further, in exactly these powers of appointing ministers, the general influences of monarchy. Burke's 'Present Discontents' is an answer to claims of this sort. His Conservatism will not admit of any changes which disturb organically the English constitution—the inheritance, as that constitution is, of past ages of struggle, and the chosen vehicle for the expression of the public will. In other points there is much in Burke to remind us of Carlyle. He, too, pins his faith on a government by aristocracy. He, too, has a scorn for the sceptical and destructive philosophers of the eighteenth century. His denunciation of these atheists and infidels who are "the outlaws of the constitution, not of this country, but of the human race," may be paralleled by Carlyle's feeling that the "last Sceptical Century" was

\* 'Latter-Day Pamphlets,' pp. 113, 114.     † *Ibid.*, p. 133.



a hideous monstrosity, with its tendency to convert the world into a steam-engine. But Burke had a delicate and profound sense of the bond of sympathetic union which unites a national constitution with all the various interacting elements of a society, and this is absent in Carlyle. So, too, Burke was possessed of a trust in the people which Carlyle could never feel. We could never imagine Carlyle saying, as Burke did, that "in all disputes between the people and their rulers, the presumption is at least upon a par in favour of the people;" or that "he could scarcely conceive any choice the people could make to be so very mischievous, as the existence of any human force capable of resisting it." Very different in spirit is Carlyle's bitter hostility to Democracy. Democracy is to him, by the nature of it, a self-cancelling business; and gives in the long-run a net result of zero. "Democracy never yet, that we heard of, was able to accomplish much work beyond that same cancelling of itself." "It is, take it where you will in our Europe, but a regulated method of rebellion and abrogation." It is the consummation of No-government and Laissez-faire. A Chaos with ballot-boxes: Anarchy *plus* a street constable. "Not towards this impossibility, self-government 'of a multitude by a multitude:' but towards some possibility, government by the wisest, does bewildered Europe struggle." \*

It would not be easy to see more clearly than by such passages as these, how great is the chasm which divides Carlyle from a child of the modern age. Carlyle is fond

\* 'Chartism,' pp. 372, 373.

of speaking of the Eternal Silences and the Immensities, the real, secret nature of Things, and the law of the Universe. These he believes to be on his side—on the side of the Real Ruler, of the aristocracy of fact, of the government by the wisest. Yet it is at least conceivable that one, who knows and feels the forces of the age and the tendency of the time, should speak of a great Democratic future as that which the Eternal Silences and Immensities ordain. Such an one may know that the experiment which has to be tried is a new one, fraught with dangers and difficulties apparently insuperable; he feels the possibility of peril, but he knows the inexorableness of Time. Go into the Future he must; try that experiment he will—*because* the secret nature of things points onward to Democracy, to Universal Suffrage, to the government of a nation by itself, as an imminent and inevitable Future. It is not only the advocate of an oligarchy who can boast the Eternal Silences on his side.

Yet even so, in Carlyle's treatment of this and of kindred themes, there is a quality wholly unique and incommunicable. He is the veritable *Vox clamantis e deserto*; his fervid imagination can convert what to the grosser eye are vacant ideals into concrete, tangible fact; his masterful grasp of the problem, combined with the range and sweep of his passionate, hysterical oratory, can carry even a man of sober judgment off his legs. It is so rare—the union of flashing, blinding eloquence with the strict and consistent treatment of the subject, so wholly overmastering the magnificent, declamatory denunciation

mixed with the tender, wistful pitifulness. And there is the dramatic gift, the irony, the wonderful humour, the picturesqueness and pertinency of epithet. "Nature, when her scorn of a slave is divinest, and blazes like the blinding lightning against his slavehood, often enough flings him a bag of money, silently saying: 'That! away; thy doom is that.'" What splendid energy of utterance! Or the comparison of the British statues "rusting in the sooty rain, black and dismal," to a set of "grisly undertakers come to bury the dead spiritualisms of mankind." Or the image of the Utilitarians, Political Economists, and Democrats, "sitting as apes with their wretched blinking eyes, squatted round a fire which they cannot feed with new wood,—which they say will last for ever without new wood,—or, alas, which they say is going out for ever."

Who can resist such incisive imagery as this? Or, to take but one other instance,—all having been taken at random within the compass of some fifty chance pages in the 'Latter-Day Pamphlets'—the lesson of *ennui*, which he draws out in the concluding pages, with its definition—"the painful cry of an impassioned heroism." The atmosphere which Carlyle makes us breathe is always healthy, stimulating, invigorating; it fills the lungs and the chest with all the life and power of a veritable inspiration; it braces the muscles with the energy of hope and cheerful resolution. He, too, like any republican politician, sees the hollowness of a policy of Imperialism. "What concern," he asks, "has the British nation with foreign

nations and their enterprises? Any concern at all, except that of handsomely keeping apart from them?"\*

And again: "The *prestige* of England on the Continent, I am told, is much decayed of late: which is a lamentable thing to various editors; to me not. Prestige, præstigiū, magical illusion—I never understood that poor England had in her good days, or cared to have, any prestige on the Continent, or elsewhere. The word was Napoleonic, expressive enough of a Grand-Napoleonic fact: better leave it on its own side of the Channel; not wanted here!"†

And if in some parts of his political theory we find that the magnificent Idealist needs to be confronted with the diminutive personage of practice and experience; if we require to supplement the 'Latter-Day Pamphlets'—say, with Bagehot on the 'English Constitution,' or Mill on 'Representative Government'—we are but true to the irony of history. Prophets, in the wise arrangements of Nature, always find effective contrast in the presence of Empiricists.‡

\* 'Latter-Day Pamphlets,' p. 174.

† 'Shooting Niagara,' p. 377. For other corrections of Carlyle's Conservatism, see 'Past and Present,' pp. 203—205.

‡ The recent changes in the political world and the curious disruption of political parties have apparently disguised some of the principles laid down in the preceding essay. But the essential divergence between the party of Progress and the party of Reaction cannot be permanently obliterated.



## STUDIES IN THE PROPHETIC NATURE.

### EMERSON, AS THINKER AND WRITER.

IN the last essay we have already seen that the term 'prophet' or 'seer' conveniently designates a particular kind of literary man, whom it would be hard to describe in any other way. The essential characteristic of the species is the impossibility of defining it by positive affirmations. The prophet in literature has nothing positive about him except his name. He can only be negatively indicated by showing that he is *not* a series of other characters, like, yet unlike. And hence it is hard to discover his exact place in the economy of nature. He is not a philosopher, though he is like one; for though he dabbles in philosophic opinions, and may even be a historian of philosophy, he does not possess a reasoned system of his own, and many of his opinions are not mutually consistent. Nor is he a poet, though he has many poetic traits; for as a rule, though he can feel, he cannot sing; he possesses imagination, but lacks the sacred fire. Is he then a preacher, an anointed priest of the Lord? Yes and no. He is eminently hortatory; the



whole cast of his mind is didactic, authoritative, dogmatic ; but he is consumed with fiery indignation against his fellow-preachers, whom he accuses of tainting the sincere milk of the word. Still less is he the cultivated *littérateur*, for though he cares for style, it is only as strictly subordinate to the sermonic qualities of his writings—to give wings to his exalted moods, and press home his ethical lesson. He never delivers a purely literary verdict, but under the fatal dominion of the Æsopian manner, abruptly ends his criticism with a “here beginneth the moral.” He resents the imputation of being the child of the age ; he dislikes science ; he loathes utilitarianism ; he combines a belief in freedom of the will with some stern admiration of a presiding fate ; he is a firm advocate of the moral sentiment ; he is fond of teleologic interpretation ; he has two or three capital thoughts which he is never weary of emphasizing ; he worships a God whom he is unable to expound to any one else. He is above all things holy, which being analyzed into its elements would appear to signify that he is a mystical and spiritualist thinker, full of a graceful emotion and an engaging romance. What useful office can such a man fulfil ? He can inspire, he can communicate an impulse. Like the guiding hand over some complicated machinery, like the leader in a cotillon, like the general on the dawn of a day of battle, he can give the word of command.

If this be true in different measure of the Isaiahs, the Swedenborgs, the Carlyles, and the Ruskins of our humanity, the difficulty of estimation is greater when we

come on a possibly second-rate prophet, with regard to whom there is some doubt whether he succeeded in catching the prophetic mantle as it fell. For then all our negative definitions return with greater force, and it is doubtful whether anything is left except the sound of some hollow, ineffectual voice and the gestures of some invisible phantom. Hence the curiously different estimates which have been held about Emerson, from the glowing and somewhat indiscriminating enthusiasm of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Mr. Moncure D. Conway, to the appreciative but critical estimate of Mr. Morley, and the cold and ambiguous compliments of Mr. Matthew Arnold. For Emerson is always giving the impression of a just balked ascendancy, a narrowly intercepted splendour; fine and almost imperceptible lines seem to divide him from the highest and the best. He is always highly commended but rarely in the first class. *Proxime accessit* is the fit epitaph for his tombstone.

However little the prophet may feel himself the result of antecedent conditions, however strong may be his belief in the freedom of the will and the ascendancy of the personal initiative, science obtains her revenge on him by resolving him into his circumstances, and his forefathers. When it is said that a great man lays the burden on his contemporaries of understanding him, the phrase is in reality full of gentle irony. For it is just what contemporaries are debarred from doing: being too near the object, they cannot get the right perspective; or, rather, for the very reason that they are his contemporaries, they

are too full of the subtle influence of personality which a great man inevitably exhales. In the presence of a great man we irresistibly believe in the freedom of the will. It is only when we study long periods of time that we gain the scientific attitude, and are able to mark the courses and lines of fate and destiny which have moulded the limbs of the hero. Perhaps we are too near Emerson; perhaps the difficulty of estimation is the most decisive proof of his greatness. But, meanwhile, it is not without interest to see how certain predisposing forces found their proper issue in his person and character, and prefigured, as Leibnitz said of the veins of the marble, the form of the statue.

Nothing, for instance, seems clearer than that he was bound to preach. Emerson calls himself "an incorrigible spouting Yankee," and the remark, though of course exaggerated, contains substantial justice. He came of an ancestry who were preachers. The first of the line, the Reverend Joseph Emerson, was minister of the town of Mendon, Massachusetts. Peter Bulkeley, minister of Concord, was one of his forefathers. Edward Emerson, son of Joseph, was deacon, at all events, of the first church in Newbury. William Emerson, Waldo's grandfather, was pastor of the church at Concord, and a notable patriot at the outbreak of the Revolutionary war. William, his father, preached in Harvard and in Boston, and appears to have been a liberal and enlightened theologian as well as a man of attractive personal appearance, and possessed of a melodious voice. Besides, Ralph Waldo Emerson spent much time in the family of Dr. Ezra Ripley, whom his

grandmother married as her second husband. Here was certainly, as Dr. Holmes has said, "an inheritance of theological instincts." It is true that he tried himself to be a minister, and failed, owing to a want of sympathy with his congregation on the subject of the Eucharist; but though the ostensible title was wanting, the spirit and the instincts remained. He adopted the profession of lecturing, an object of ambition about which, as he told Carlyle, he felt very strongly; and he brought to the task not only a captivating manner and a voice of singular sweetness, but all the force and aptitude of a forensic and didactic cast of mind. Hence, though on a superficial view he appears to oppose the clerical faction by a certain Socratic quality of inquiry, a dangerous leaning to Pantheism, and by being, as he himself says, "an iconoclast and an unsettler always," he will be found at bottom not untrue to the traditions of his lineage.

In their effects on literary style there is much in common between the lecturing-desk and the pulpit, and whatever of unchastened expression or irritating phrase may be found in Emerson's prose may generally be traced to this source. The speaker or lecturer is never chary of his sentences; to produce his picture he adds stroke on stroke through excess of caution lest he should fail to produce his effect. Thus there is a diffuseness, an unnecessary repetition, an over-elaboration of a thought. The eye in looking over a printed page gathers in a moment the thought of the writer, and is quick to anticipate the sequences and deductions, but the ear of the listener is not equally helped,



and has therefore to be given time by phrase after phrase to apprehend the steps of an argument. Just as dictation, in the case of a writer, is supposed to have a bad effect on his style, because it replaces conciseness and grip by wordiness and reiteration, so the lecture, when printed in the form of an essay, irritates us by the slowness of its march and its want of adaptation to the rapid sweep of vision. Moreover, it is difficult for either lecturer or speaker to deliver his thoughts paragraphically, and the paragraph is the keystone of literary form. When we read some of Emerson's writing, the paragraphs into which it is divided seem more or less accidental, not essential to the movement of the thought, as though they were thus divided arbitrarily after the lecture had been written down, to convert it into the form of an essay. Another effect, due to the same cause, is the jerkiness and want of cohesion between the sentences. Emerson says himself of his own writing, in a letter to Carlyle, that "each sentence is an infinitely repellent particle." There is no smoothness in the progress, but rather an uneasy jolt over difficult boulders. Even in the best of his essays this tends to spoil the effect, for, apart from the constant irritation produced by the want of continuity, we are reminded too inconveniently of the mechanical part of reading, and are inclined to make much of the difficulty which is sometimes found in apprehending Emerson's meaning. In the case of a lecture the voice supplies the links which connect the sentences; the intonation, the emphasis, the rate at which the words are spoken combine to suggest the intention of

the speaker. There are probably many lectures which seem perfectly plain when listened to, which yet are not without obscurity when read. For there is so much in a man's personality and presence, such electric force in his eloquence or his gesture, that we think, as it were, with him in obedience to his voice, and criticism only awakes when the voice has ceased.

The effects on the thought of a man who habitually lectures, are no less visible. He learns through constant necessity of exhortation a certain windiness, an intellectual emptiness, an everlasting appeal to emotion and feeling. He is not prodigal of his ideas, but acquires a prudential economy, beating a thought very thin, as it were, to make it go a long way. The constant appeal to feeling seems to starve the possibility of thought; there must always be a lowering of sentiment to the mass of the auditory, because while in the possession of ideas one man is strongly distinguished from another, we all meet on a commoner platform in feeling and emotion. There is also the necessity of the moral. "The lessons which can be drawn," in pulpit phrase, form always the conclusion of the lecture, to the undoubted edification of the masses and the distraction and *ennui* of the thoughtful. For a cultured man can draw his own moral, and feels it more or less of an insult to his intelligence when commonplace deductions are drawn in a commonplace way. In the days of our childhood we had an irresistible inclination to shut the book when the fatal paragraph, "And now, my dear children," began. Not less strong is the temptation which

assails us to forget the excellence of the criticism as soon as Emerson clears his throat and in a hollow voice commences the final edification. In the lectures on "Representative men" there is much that is delicate in interpretation and suggestive in criticism; but we are simply irritated when we are told that the lesson of Montaigne's life is that a man who ignores "the moral sentiment which never forfeits its supremacy," is doomed to be a sceptic; that a man like Swedenborg, who immolates his genius and fame at the shrine of conscience, will probably go mad; that the defect of Shakespeare is that, instead of being that combination of poet and priest "which the world still wants," he was only poet, and ignored the priestly functions; and that Plato failed because "he tried to swallow the whole world and found it too great a morsel." The better the literary criticism the less does it require the moralizing conclusion. Audiences only want to hear the secret why some great man was not otherwise than he was. Wise men know that humanity is a diamond of many facets. Perhaps even Emerson's optimism is explained by these considerations. "There is," he tells us in 'The Young American,' "a sublime and friendly destiny by which the human race is guided—the race never dying, the individual never spared—to results affecting masses and ages. That genius has infused itself into nature. It indicates itself by a small excess of good; a small balance in brute facts always favourable to the side of reason. It works for masses, labours for the general, never for the individual." This is very good hearing when one belongs

to a mass or company, listening to a lecture. But the solitary reader or thinker, who has not round him the general and diffusive sympathy of a crowd, is not equally satisfied. He is told that nature does not care for the individual, and in moments of solitude his individuality is borne in upon him with indefeasible claims. Optimism or meliorism may be the natural attitude of an audience, but pessimism is too often the creed of the solitary thinker. Emerson, with his lecturing instincts, his aptitude for the secular pulpit and the posture of exhortation, becomes naturally optimistic, and believes in the evolution of the better. Carlyle, with his solitude, and his nerves, and his bad digestion, is more of the pessimist. It is an interesting speculation to reflect that Carlyle, if he had lectured oftener, might have lightened some of the darker elements of his creed, especially as the physical exertion involved in lecturing is undoubtedly a stimulant for imperfect powers of assimilation.

On the other hand, that quality in Emerson which communicates impulse and inspiration is equally due to the ancestry of preachers and the habits of a lecturer. There is a freshness, a vitality, a breezy force of life and spirits, which not only animate the writer's style, but add wings to the reader's thoughts. Socrates, long ago, found that the best way of getting hold of men was to talk with them. The living intercourse between men's minds was thus promoted by "the lively and animated word," which went from one to the other, and got better as it went. Emerson, who was in some respects a true disciple of



Socrates, himself knew the secret of "sowing and planting knowledge" by oral communication. No one has better single thoughts or phrases. No one can, in a word or two, draw a better or fresher picture of nature, not as though it were a mere matter of canvas and oil-paints, but as a living and working agency, carrying on its thousand offices through a thousand different lines of activity. "The world is new, untried. Do not believe the past. I give you the universe a virgin to-day." "Truth is such a fly-away, such a sly-boots, so untransportable and unbarrelable a commodity, that it is as bad to catch as light." "Men have come to speak of the Divine revelation as something long ago given and done, as if God were dead." "It is God in us which checks the language of petition by a grander thought." "A good reader can nestle into Plato's brain and think from thence; but not in Shakespeare's. We are still out of doors." The words seem alive, as though they were not so much the cold abstract results of thought as themselves furnished with hands, and feet, and wings. They are all fresh coined in the mint of nature; in Emerson's beautiful phrase, "one with the blowing clover and the falling rain."

Besides the lecturing or moralizing vein, there was in Emerson a distinct vein of philosophical culture. He was born a preacher, and he educated himself by the most promiscuous reading into a kind of philosopher. The form of philosophy which had the most attraction for his mind was that which is known as the Transcendental, or the Absolute, which tends to regard the totality of things,

the central point of unity, rather than the endless multiplicity and diversity of nature. Emerson loved to trace analogies, to study resemblances, to find everywhere the type, the law, the energizing form, and to discover in the natural world the analogue of the spiritual and mental. Every mind has its instinctive affinities, and in philosophy some men are born idealists, as others are born to be empirics and realists. This is why—despite the verdict of Lotze—the problems of psychology lie deeper than the problems of metaphysics, for before the metaphysical structure was created, the obscurer laws existed which ordained the underlying psychological tendency. Emerson's favourite reading showed his natural aptitudes, for he is most indebted in sympathetic as well as in scholarly relation to Berkeley, to Kant, to Coleridge, to Wordsworth, and to Goethe. With them he will study the wholes of things, and not be distracted with particularity and detail. "Im Ganzen, Resolut zu leben," he might be said to have assumed as his motto. The masterly philosophical analysis of Berkeley appears in the earliest of his published works, 'Nature,' which bears the date of 1836. That we see all things in God was a discovery of Malebranche; that natural objects exist as a sort of divine visual language addressed by the Creator to his children, was one of the earliest deductions which Berkeley drew from his 'Essay on Vision.' And so Emerson prefixes to his essay certain lines which inculcate the same lesson:—

"The eye reads omens where it goes,  
And speaks all languages the rose."

For in nature man does not feel himself alone and unacknowledged. "The fields and woods nod to me and I to them. The waving of the boughs is new to me and old. It takes me by surprise and yet is not unknown. Its effect is like that of a higher thought or a better emotion coming over me, when I deemed I was thinking justly or doing right." Idealism is the natural belief of a thinking being. "It is the uniform effect of culture in the human mind, not to shake our faith in the stability of a particular phenomenon, as of heat, water, azote, but to lead us to regard nature as phenomenon, not as substance, to attribute necessary existence to spirit, to esteem nature as an accident and an effect." Idealism, in point of fact, is taught in many ways—by the changing phenomena of motion; by poetry, which everywhere grasps at ideal affinities between events; by philosophy, by ethics and religion; yet idealism is not enough to satisfy the intellectual craving for a system. It is too negative, too coldly individualistic, tending to make every one who espouses it believe that the world is born afresh with the birth of every consciousness. "It leaves God out of me," says Emerson, by which he means that there is also needed some absolute ontological principle to be the fountain-head alike of nature and the individual consciousness. Idealism must become absolute idealism or transcendentalism—that is, it must with Hegel believe in the absolute spirit of universal self-consciousness, which is none other than God. So only can the human mind rest in the discovery of a primal unity and absolute first cause. "Three problems

are put by nature to the mind: What is matter? whence is it? and whereto? The first of these questions only the ideal theory answers. Idealism says: matter is a phenomenon, not a substance. But when, following the invisible steps of thought, we come to inquire whence is matter, and whereto? many truths arise to us out of the recesses of consciousness. We learn that the highest is present to the soul of man; that the dread universal essence, which is not wisdom, or love, or beauty, or power, but all in one, and each entirely is that for which all things exist, and that by which they are; that spirit creates; that behind nature, and throughout nature, spirit is present, one and not compound. It does not act upon us from without, that is, in space and time, but spiritually, or through ourselves: therefore, that spirit, that is the Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us, as the life of the tree puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the old." Thus nature, the individual consciousness, and the universal consciousness, or God, form a sort of Trinity in Emerson's creed; they are the three elements of which things consist—the three 'moments,' as the Germans would say, in his system. Whether the proper relations of the three are always duly preserved by Emerson is another question. Sometimes the individual consciousness appears to be unduly exaggerated in importance—when, for instance, a man is told "to plant himself indomitably upon his instincts," being assured that by this self-reliance he will gain, not only culture, but even his God. At other



times nature is not always kept in the subordinate position of "something that is not built up around us, but through us," when in the 'Method of Nature' Emerson tells us that nature has no end, not even the creation of man, as though nature were some great impersonal power, which was the ultimate ground and substance of all life. But then no idealist philosopher is absolutely consistent. Just as a consistent sensationalism, according to the late Professor Green, ought to be speechless, so a consistent idealism would be a kind of monomania. Nor is consistency an especial attribute of Emerson's thought. Not only is there the contradiction between the assertion in the 'Method of Nature,' that man is not the end of nature, and the more usual assertion that nature only exists in strict subordination for man, as something "which is built up through us;" but we have the two rival and contradictory theories that there is an interdependence of all things in nature, and that everything is self-existent, sharing the self-existence of the Deity ('Transcendentalist'). Moreover, the mysticism constantly found in Emerson's thought is not easy to bring into correspondence with that literal adherence to fact which, by the example of Napoleon, he recommends in 'Literary Ethics.'

His philosophical sympathies had their natural effects upon the mode and character of his thought. So far as science was concerned, the customary attitude of his mind was one of antagonism. "The savants are chatty and vain, but hold them hard to principle and definition, and they become mute and near-sighted. What is motion? What

is beauty? What is matter? What is force? What is life? Push them hard and they will not be loquacious." He does not admire the scientists, the microscopic observers, the 'learned men' who

"Love not the flower they pluck and know it not,  
And all their botany is Latin names;"

and everywhere contrasts them with the sons of nature, the poets who "see the flower and the bud with a poet's curiosity and awe." Two influences, however, served to modify this antagonism. In the first place Emerson fully accepted that parallelism or identification of natural and spiritual law which, in our incurious age, has served to lift into sudden popularity Professor Drummond's work on the same subject. Both Emerson and the learned Professor probably derived it from the first volume of Swedenborg's 'Animal Kingdom.' "One might swear," says Swedenborg, "that the physical world was purely symbolical of the spiritual world; insomuch that if we choose to express any natural truth in physical and definite vocal terms, and to convert these terms only into the corresponding and spiritual terms, we shall by this means elicit a spiritual truth, or theological dogma, in place of the physical truth or precept." In the second place, as time went on, Emerson began to see that the future religion, whatever it might be, must be based on science, ethical and physical; and hence he feels more attracted to it, perhaps owing to genial intercourse with Agassiz. "The religion which is to guide and fulfil the present and

coming ages must be intellectual. The scientific mind must have a faith which is science. There will be a new church founded on moral science, at first cold and naked, a babe in a manger again—the algebra and mathematics of ethical law, the church of men to come, without shawms, or psaltery, or sackbut; but it will have heaven and earth for its beams and rafters, science for symbol and illustration; it will fast enough gather beauty, music, pictures, poetry.” (‘Worship.’)

Towards utilitarianism, however, of every kind, whether applied to ethical determination or to nature, Emerson always preserved a repellent attitude. Everything has two uses, the first of which, being the most practical, is the basest; the second, which is the symbolic or suggestive use, is the only one which is worthy of the poet or the philosopher. Far more, perhaps, than any other thinker—certainly more than any modern philosopher, with the possible exception of Dr. Martineau—Emerson believed in instinct, or intuition, or the individual moral sense, which is to make use indeed of experience, but which is above and higher than experience. Throughout we are told to consult perpetually the sacred shrine within us, which is to lead us to all truth, to believe in it as the highest oracle, to confide in its revelations despite all the suggestions of sense or the understanding. The American scholar is told to plant himself indomitably on his instincts and there abide, and the huge world will come round to him. The Transcendentalist is said to be right when he leans entirely on his character and ‘eats angels’

food.' This is only another form of the authoritative individual conscience uninformed and uninformable, uncultured and incapable of culture, which has often so disastrously betrayed its disciples. In this as well as in other points we see Emerson's natural leanings to mysticism, his sympathies with Jacobi and Swedenborg and the exalted moods of Plato. For the path to mysticism has always lain through three stages: first, an indiscriminating and devoted belief in the authority of the individual instinct, intuition, conscience; then the acceptance of another spirit in all respects similar to the individual, but larger, omnipresent and omnipotent; finally, the discovery that the only end of life for the individual is the absorption of his spirit in the larger spirit, the "swooning into Godhead" of Plotinus the Alexandrian. Thus the scholar can only be great by being passive to the superincumbent spirit. He need not be afraid to be too ascetic, for fear of not publishing his thoughts, for "thought is all light and publishes itself to the universe. It will speak though you were dumb by its own miraculous organ." From this point of view a distinction is made between Reason and Understanding, the latter being the organ of science, the former being the same as instinct and intuition, and therefore the organ of faith. Thus, in the 'Divinity College Address,' Christ's sayings are declared to be a doctrine of the reason, not therefore to be apprehended by the common understanding, which in consequence perverted them and made him a miracle-working God. Whether anything is really gained



by this division of the functions of the mind against one another, so that each higher activity seems the antithesis of the lower, and Understanding opposes Sense and is itself the opposite of Reason, Emerson does not prove to us; but this is the heritage we have received from the German school of idealism. In the curious essay called the 'Over-soul,' we have the most explicit declarations of Emerson's mysticism. The 'Over-soul' is that unity within which each man's particular being is contained and made one with all other, the common heart, the overpowering reality. It is the perceiver and revealer of truth, working by means of personal instinct and genius. Hence it comes that "men are wiser than they know," a favourite doctrine with Emerson. These revelations are always perceptions of the absolute law. They do not answer the questions which the understanding asks. They do not tell us, for instance, whether the soul is immortal or no, but they assure us that truth, justice, love, and beauty have nothing to do with the idea of duration. ("The moment the doctrine of immortality is separately taught man is already fallen.") The same omniscience flows into the intellect and makes what we call genius. It only acts by entire possession; it is the consciousness that the Highest dwells with a man. "The soul gives itself alone, original and pure to the Lonely, Original, and Pure, who on that condition gladly inhabits, leads and speaks through it." Most men, as Plato would say, have not the eyes to see universals and entities, and cannot move with freedom in this region of abstraction and symbolism, but it may be

suspected that to most readers the following passage comes perilously near the borders of inspired nonsense. "Of a purely spiritual life, history has afforded no example; I mean we have yet no man who has leaned entirely on his character and eaten angels' food; who, trusting to his sentiments, found life made of miracles, who, working for universal aims, found himself fed, he knew not how, clothed, sheltered, and weaponed, he knew not how; and yet it was done by his own hands." That Emerson was the sanest of the Transcendental faction who wrote in 'The Dial' and complained of being misunderstood, only proves how deficient in self-control the Transcendentalists of Boston must have been.

Emerson's poetry will be interpreted differently according to the estimation held of the value of form in poetical composition. If it be held, as it surely must, that no artist can be regardless of form without forfeiting many chaplets from his poetic crown, then Emerson's laurels will present a peculiarly bare and disordered appearance. He redeems his reputation, it is true, by many happy touches and graceful thoughts, but the structural instinct—the natural tendency to obey laws of metre and rhythm—seems entirely wanting. There are many poets who run so easily in their self-imposed harness, that only criticism can detect the strict rules in accordance with which the work has been constructed. There are other poets on a lower scale, of whom we have abundant examples in contemporary literature, who obey the laws of their composition with such surprising dexterity that, though the

artifice is revealed, they almost succeed in concealing their want of inspiration. Emerson is certainly not artificial, but then he is not naturally artistic in his poems. They are formless, without end, beginning, or middle; inchoate, unhewn, unpolished; only just emerging from the quarry of nature. From nature they assuredly come; but they know nothing of the art which adds to nature, nor yet of that higher art which nature makes. They are written in the octosyllabic metre—"the normal respiratory measure," as Dr. Holmes calls it—which is easy and slipshod and diffuse, and which knows no reason why it should ever commence, and having commenced why it should ever stop.

"Burly, dozing humble-bee,  
Where thou art is clime for me;  
I will follow thee alone,  
Thou animated torrid zone!  
Zigzag steerer, desert cheerer,  
Let me chase thy waving lines;  
Keep me nearer, me thy hearer,  
Singing over shrubs and vines."

This zigzag-steering, desert-cheering, animated torrid zone is only fit for the monotonous chant of the National school-room. Emerson told Carlyle, in a burst of honest self-depreciation, that he was no poet, but only belonged "to a low department of literature, the reporters, suburban men."

It is, of course, not always that Emerson is at this low level. But the extraordinary thing is that he is nearly always unmusical; he seems born without an ear. In

many of his finer poems lines occur which are almost bewildering in their absence of rhythm, or even of feet. In the striking lines which he prefixes to his essay on 'Nature,' he writes—

“And striving to be man, the worm  
Mounts through all the spires of form,”

without, seemingly, discovering that the last line is deficient in a syllable. He makes 'feeble' rhyme with 'people,' and 'Lord' rhyme with 'abroad'; and 'wood-pecker' finds its echo in the excruciating sound of 'surly bear.' Dr. Holmes, who is on the whole a stout champion of Emersonian verse, quotes other instances of this unmusical defect, for instance:—

“Oh, what is heaven but the fellowship  
Of minds that each can stand against the world  
*By its own meek and incorruptible will?*”

In its symbolic and abstract tendency, also, the poetry of Emerson lays itself open to criticism. This was the point on which Mr. Matthew Arnold insisted in his 'Discourses in America.' It was natural enough that Emerson, with his love of the universal, of the type, of the underlying law, which meets us everywhere in his prose, should also couch his poetic thought in abstractions. But it is a question whether the love of the sensuously concrete be not an essential quality of the poet. It may be true that Emerson's verse differs from that of his contemporaries as algebra from arithmetic; it still remains open for us to assert that poetry should not deal with algebraic symbols.

Yet there is some truth in one of Emerson's remarks to



Miss Peabody, "I am not a great poet, but whatever is of me is a poet." For he is full of noble thoughts, and of some noble and memorable lines:—

"Out from the heart of nature rolled  
The burdens of the Bible old;  
The hand that rounded Peter's dome,  
And groined the aisles of Christian Rome,  
Wrought in a sad sincerity;  
Himself from God he could not free;  
He builded better than he knew,  
The conscious stone to beauty grew."

The whole of the poem from which these lines are taken, entitled, 'The Problem,' is stately, sonorous, and dignified—a head and shoulders above the usual stature of Emerson's muse. So, too, the poem called 'May-Day,' and that entitled 'Woodnotes' are full of a wild and wayward grace:—

"Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,  
Or dip thy paddle in the lake,  
But it carves the bow of beauty there,  
And the ripples in rhyme the oar forsake."

Emerson is generally at his best when he is describing nature; and in poems like 'The Snowstorm,' 'Monadnoc,' 'Musketaquid,' 'The Adirondacs,' names redolent of the New England in which his heart was centred, he is full of the gracious and imaginative enthusiasm of the poet. Here and there he touches the soul with something like an inspiration: "Heartily know, when half-gods go, the gods arrive;" "Himself from God he could not free;" "And fired the shot heard round the world" (Concord Hymn); "Music pours on mortals its beautiful disdain"—

in such lines, to which more might be added, we feel the sudden glow of the divine fire. And in two of his poems, 'Blight,' and 'Days,' there is an innate feeling for structural dignity which might well have converted the careless lines into a noble sonnet. But the unmusical ear is the saddest of defects: "like a hoarse voice in a beautiful person, it is a kind of warning."

Emerson's fame will probably be independent of any single contribution to the world's literature. For his merit does not appear to consist either in his rhetoric, or his philosophy, or his poetry, but rather in the genial spirit of the man, and in the generous and wholesome influence which he diffuses around him, like some bracing and exhilarating atmosphere. In a different sense from that of the sermon or the ethical homily, it 'does one good' to read him; for he braces the sinews and sets the blood coursing more freely through the veins. In this respect he stands at the opposite pole to Carlyle, who supplies the malodorous and distasteful medicine, while Emerson gives the tonic of blithe air and happy sunshine. His spirits are so unfailing, his mental attitude is so sane and manlike, that he cannot even bear that one should mention his maladies, lest he become the querulous valetudinarian. "I beseech you by all angels to hold your peace and not pollute the morning, to which all the house-mates bring serene and pleasant thoughts, by corruption and groans. Come out of the azure. Love the day." The distemper known as 'blue devils' did not apparently haunt Emerson. "All my hurts my garden spade can

heal," he says; albeit that his son, when he saw him digging, is reported to have told him to beware lest he should 'dig his leg.' There remains, however, a certain desultoriness which will probably prevent Emerson's work from becoming anything more than inspiring and suggestive. Perhaps this is the inevitable accompaniment of one who embraces a transcendental creed, like the shadow which lies across the valley of him who walks on the heights. Perhaps it is the especial drawback of the modern American mind, which seems to rejoice in impressions and effects and symphonies as though they were the same as honest and full-blooded work. So Emerson himself thought when he asserted that the true dignity of the scholar was not realized in America. "The mark of American merit in painting, in sculpture, in poetry, in fiction, in eloquence, seems to be a certain grace without grandeur, and itself not new but derivative; a vase of fair outline, but empty, which whoso sees may fill with what wit and character is in him, but which does not, like the charged cloud, overflow with terrible beauty and emit lightnings on all beholders." The grace of Emerson no one can deny, though even this is inferior to the literary finish and elegance of Hawthorne; but that he was not new but derivative, let his spiritual exemplars testify, who were Plato and Coleridge, Swedenborg and Wordsworth.

## HAWTHORNE'S ROMANCES.

"Nevertheless it involved a charm, on which, a devoted epicure of my own emotions, I resolved to pause and enjoy the moral sillabub until quite dissolved away."—*Hawthorne's Blithedale Romance*.

THE sentence of Emerson on the character of the American genius, that "it has a certain grace without grandeur, and is itself not new but derivative," is only partially true as applied to Hawthorne. For the special qualities which distinguish his writings form an almost unique phenomenon in literature, partly owing to their impalpable and imponderable charm, partly because of the complete fusion which they exhibit of somewhat contradictory ingredients. For Hawthorne is conspicuously American, and yet he is by no means 'provincial'; he is a Puritan, and yet an artist; a moralist, and yet not devoid of a refined and exquisite cynicism. An American assuredly, for he wrote 'Our Old Home'; and born of a stock of Puritans and Calvinists, because his stories are full of the problems of sin and evil, and overweighted by the obstinately recurrent feeling of something like an original doom; and yet, by virtue of his higher efforts, a poetic genius, a consummate



artist, a cosmopolitan writer. Of the three main elements of his nature there is only one which, so far as we know, was individually his own. His inquisitorial habits, and his predilection for 'cases of conscience,' were his heritage from the Judge Hawthorne who condemned the Salem witches; his idealistic dreaminess, and his questionings of sense and outward things, we can attribute perhaps more doubtfully to the influence of Emerson and the Transcendentalists. There remains his æsthetic taste, his "squeamish love of the beautiful," and his general artistic sense, which we cannot father on either ancestors or contemporaries, but without which he would have remained as much 'provincial' as Alcott, and Channing, and Thoreau. But this individual element cannot be torn out from its intimate relationship with New England characteristics. The fibres which connect Hawthorne with his native soil and his grim old forefathers are too close and intricate for such rude surgery; and it is the manner in which his supreme artistic genius is interpenetrated by Puritanical moods and transcendental dreams which gives it its unique importance in modern literature.

The prefaces which Hawthorne prefixes to his books are all charming and generally irrelevant. None, however, is more charming or more irrelevant than the chapter on the Custom House which opens the romance of 'The Scarlet Letter.' In it he refers to his ancestry—those grave, bearded, sable-cloaked, and steeple-crowned progenitors, who made Salem famous or infamous with their martial swords and still more martial Bibles. They had

the Puritanic traits, both good and evil: they were soldiers, legislators, judges and rulers in the Church, and they were bitter persecutors of witches and Quakers. Hawthorne pictures them as undergoing a dreary retribution for their cruelties in having so degenerate an offspring as himself, a writer of story-books, who, from their point of view, might as well have been a fiddler. "Yet," he remarks, "let them scorn me as they will, strong traits of their nature have intertwined themselves with mine." In this, as often in his self-criticism, Hawthorne was entirely in the right. He is haunted by the same problems, though to him they are matters for his imagination rather than for his faith; to him, too, as well as to them, the dreary consciousness of sin weighs like an ancestral and immitigable burden on men's souls. The point of view is, however, changed by his artistic instinct. No longer are present sin and future damnation, Divine predestination to evil and human responsibility for transgression, facts of awful moral import, which are to colour the practice and darken the sympathies of every individual soul; but only psychological problems, full of speculative interest, themes for imaginative treatment, colours merely of sombre hue which the artist keeps on his palette, whereby to heighten the effect of his dramatic pictures. It is as though a man in middle age were to meet again in dream the bogeys which haunted his childish nightmares, and change them from tyrannical masters into servile sprites and obedient Ariels. So purely as playthings for his art does Hawthorne treat the witches' sabbaths and the midnight frolics in the forest, and all the

kindred notions of dæmonic possession. Nay, he extends the same treatment even to hereditary curses and legendary sins, to mesmeric influences and occult phenomena of magic. Like the Mother Rigby of his tale, he lets his familiar Dickon light his pipe, and constructs one or two imaginary Feathertops to delude the too seriously practical or too crudely realistic portion of his audience. Only the thing is managed so gracefully that we are willingly deluded; the artistic touch is so sure and so fine, that we feel a delicate æsthetic relish in such funereal themes. It is not, as he says, "the devil himself who gets into his inkstand," when he fills his pen, but rather a humorous Mephistopheles with a poetic taste for the graceful and the picturesque.

To this we have to add a seemingly real belief in philosophical idealism—perhaps due to contact with Emerson and Alcott: that the so-called facts which surround us are not real but phenomenal; that man's life is but a dream; that our truest life is not the external one, but the internal warmth of emotion and feeling which gives us an instinctive insight into truth; these things seem to have been part of Emerson's creed. "Indeed we are but shadows: we are not endowed with real life, and all that seems most real about us is but the thinnest substance of a dream till the heart be touched. That touch creates us, then we begin to be, thereby we are beings of reality and inheritors of eternity." Such a sentence seems obviously to bear the Emersonian impress. The same sentiment is more comically expressed in the following sentences, which relate to Haw-

thorne's life in the Brook Farm experiment. "It already looks like a dream behind me. The real Me was never an associate of the community; there has been a spectral Appearance there, sounding the horn at daybreak, and milking the cows and hoeing potatoes, and raking hay, toiling in the sun, and doing me the honour to assume my name. But the spectre was not myself. Nevertheless, it is somewhat remarkable that my hands have, during the past summer, grown very brown and rough, insomuch that many people persist in believing that I, after all, was the aforesaid spectral horn-sunder, cow-milker, potato-hoer, and hay-raker. But such people do not know a reality from a shadow." No, indeed, for Hawthorne's real self was not at Brook Farm, except in the shape of Miles Coverdale; nor was he real, save when he haunted the region which divides the natural from the supernatural, the thin borderland which separates the dream life from the actual and the palpable. It can easily be seen how such idealistic tendencies increased the effect of his writings. It gave his characters some of the effect of disembodied creations, with regard to whom we have not to apply the usual canons of credibility. It rendered his Donatello a plausible fancy, and bestowed a kind of verisimilitude on such 'moonshiny' romances as 'Transformation.'

"The cursed habits of solitude," to which Hawthorne refers, the dislike of conversation and society, the shyness of his ordinary demeanour and his customary self-concentration were doubtless answerable for many of the



characteristics of his writing. Here, for instance, is a picture of the man as drawn by his friend G. W. Curtis, which will explain much of his idiosyncrasy:—

“During Hawthorne’s first year of residence in Concord, I had driven up with some friends to an æsthetic tea at Mr. Emerson’s. It was in the winter, and a great wood fire blazed upon the hospitable hearth. There were various men and women of note assembled, and I, who listened attentively to all the fine things that were said, was for some time scarcely aware of a man, who sat upon the edge of the circle, a little withdrawn, his head slightly thrown forward upon his breast, and his black eyes clearly burning under his black brow. As I drifted down the stream of talk, this person, who sat silent as a shadow, looked to me as Webster might have looked had he been a poet—a kind of poetic Webster. He rose and walked to the window, and stood there quietly for a long time watching the dead white landscape. No appeal was made to him; nobody looked after him; the conversation flowed steadily on, as if every one understood that his silence was to be respected. It was the same thing at table. In vain the silent man imbibed æsthetic tea. Whatever fancies it inspired did not flower at his lips. But there was a light in his eye which assured me that nothing was lost. So supreme was his silence that it presently engrossed me to the exclusion of everything else. There was very brilliant discourse, but this silence was much more poetic and fascinating. Fine things were said by the philosophers, but much finer things were implied by the dumbness of this gentleman with heavy brows and black hair. When he presently rose and went, Emerson, with the slow, wise smile that breaks over his face like day over the sky, said, ‘Hawthorne rides well his horse of the night.’”

The happily descriptive remark of Emerson, though it accentuates the crepuscular habit of mind, equally explains two other mental traits of Hawthorne, the tendency to abstraction and the power of introspection. Surely but few writers have had such a genius for self-criticism as Hawthorne. Psychological analysis was, indeed, a familiar

sport for his mind, and formed the modern substitute for the ancient inquisitorial instincts of his progenitors. He was so cool, so disengaged, so purely negative towards his creations, that he could not only analyze the prejudices and intuitions of others, but subject himself to the same process. He exactly hits the point, when he calls 'Transformation' a moonshiny romance; he is equally felicitous in what he says in the preface to 'Twice-Told Tales' as to the quality of his shorter stories. "The book, if you would see anything in it, requires to be read in the clear, brown, twilight atmosphere in which it was written; if opened in the sunshine, it is apt to look exceedingly like a volume of blank pages." In Miles Coverdale in the 'Blithedale Romance,' he left what appears to be a picture of himself in the midst of the Brook Farm enthusiasts. Certainly Hawthorne had no particular business to be amongst the sentimental young ladies, heavy-footed disciples of Socialism, staid devotees of the rights of equal division of property, and calm philosophic thinkers, who together constituted that most picturesque and most visionary of modern Arcadias. Miles Coverdale, too, is not especially enthusiastic. "As Hollingsworth once told me, I lack a purpose. How strange! He was ruined morally by an overplus of the same ingredient, the want of which I occasionally suspect has rendered my life all an emptiness." Or again, "No sagacious man will long retain his sagacity, if he lives expressly among reformers, without periodical return to the settled system of things to correct himself by a new

observation from the old standpoint." One can see that Hawthorne clearly recognized how little sympathy is to be got out of mental analysis, and how far a cool and somewhat self-interested common-sense falls short of being the stuff of which great historical movements are made. Coverdale, however, if a critic, is at least an amiable one and represents Hawthorne at his best. Hawthorne at his worst is represented, possibly, by the darker phantom of Gervayse Hastings in the short story called the 'Christmas Banquet'—a man whose cold curiosity in the region of emotion has left him absolutely incapable of experiencing it in his own person. Be this as it may, Hawthorne possesses in singular measure the power of dividing his mind into two departments, one of which adopts the position of critic towards the other. He reminds one of the *Doppelgänger* in Schumann's song, where a man is watching with intense interest a figure on the opposite side of the street. It has the same tricks as he is conscious of possessing, and exercises the peculiar fascination over him of a sort of objective presentation of his own most intimate qualities. The figure suddenly turns and he sees the face: with a shriek, he recognizes that it is his own.

The other characteristic, the tendency to abstraction which so solitary a mind inevitably possesses, manifests itself partly in the bloodlessness of the personages whom he depicts, partly in the love of allegory, partly again in the eerie quality of his romances. It is the gift of the higher forms of literature to possess a distinct atmosphere of their own, the influence of which we instinctively

recognize as we read. There is the atmosphere, for instance, which surrounds Mr. Morris's 'Earthly Paradise,' the heavy, sensuous air of some island of the Sirens where reigns the indolent and delicious passivity of an eternity of the lotus-flower. Or there is the eager and nipping air which surrounds much of the work of Carlyle, an air which bites shrewdly and which can only be inhaled in gasps. Or there is the quiet, summerlike, peaceful atmosphere which Emerson distils, the air of complacent optimism, when we feel that it is good to have been born, and that all things work together for good to those who love God. Far otherwise is the atmosphere which surrounds the work of Hawthorne, and no one who has once breathed it can forget its peculiar quality. In whatever time, place, or circumstance his tales are perused, instantly there rises the suggestion of a chilly and spectral air, the air of some gleaming moonlight, when all the shadows seem to have gathered an added intensity, when ordinary flesh and blood has lost colour, and to both eye and ear are borne ever and anon the visions of flying wraiths, and the echoes of a supernatural melody. The touch of the artist here is incommunicable and indescribable, and is the unique possession of his singular genius. The machinery by which the effect is worked differs, but the result is the same. Sometimes it is witchcraft, together with all the gloomy terrors of the forest at midnight, as when young Goodman Brown feels himself impelled to desert the common paths of rectitude and join the witches' revel. Sometimes it is an inherited curse, as when Judge



Pyncheon, in the 'House of the Seven Gables,' dies in the same chair as his blood-stained ancestor, and the author bids us watch for hours at his side while he taunts him with all his unfulfilled engagements. Sometimes it is the consciousness of sin, as when Arthur Dimmesdale, in 'The Scarlet Letter,' places himself on the scaffold where the partner of his guilt had been pilloried and stands in the place of shame throughout the summer night. Sometimes it is merely the consciousness of the secrecy of the human heart, as when Mr. Hooper scares his congregation by appearing before them with a black veil over his face. Sometimes, again, it is the morbid fancy of the highest and most exquisite beauty as springing from a being nurtured by the most virulent poisons, as in that short masterpiece entitled 'Rappaccini's Daughter.' Or, once more, it is the violent conjunction and contrast of opposite and discordant emotions, as when Miriam and Donatello in 'Transformation,' in the intoxication of a crime committed in common, walk feverishly and happily ecstatic through the blood-stained streets of Rome. However managed, the supernatural effect is the same. Supernatural, indeed, is not the right word to employ: for the essence of Hawthorne's art is to make it seem supremely natural, as though by some magic touch the extraordinary could become ordinary, or as though the realities of the world were but the shadows of those deeper truths which are wrongly named fantastic and imaginary. The fascination of the mystical may be difficult to analyze: certainly, if it ever touches the margin of the vulgar or the

ridiculous, it becomes repulsive : but when it is kept in control by an exquisite artistic sense, it affects us with a strange and almost immeasurable force. But if there is one writer more than another who makes us dispute the obstinate reality of the things of our work-a-day life, who teaches us to be sceptical of such ordinary foundations of a materialistic creed as matter and time and space, it is Hawthorne, with his romantic idealism, who in this respect, though from quite another side and animated by a different motive, preaches the same lesson as his compatriot Emerson, and helps us to banish the vulgar forms of realism, as possible modes of art.

Meanwhile the characters in such tales undoubtedly suffer, and sometimes the tales themselves become too obviously didactic or allegorical. "Instead of passion," Hawthorne with rare frankness confesses, "there is sentiment; and even in what purport to be pictures of actual life we have allegory, not always so warmly dressed in its habiliments of flesh and blood as to be taken into the reader's mind without a shiver. Whether from lack of power, or an unconquerable reserve, the author's touches have often an effect of tameness; the merriest man can hardly contrive to laugh at his broadest humour; the tenderest woman, one would suppose, will hardly shed warm tears at his deepest pathos." Though overstated, there is an element of truth in this self-criticism; yet those who think that Hawthorne was always cold and impassive should remember the passage in the 'English Notebooks' (September 14 1885), where he says he wonders at

Thackeray's coolness in respect to his own pathos, and compares it with his own emotion when he read the last scene of 'The Scarlet Letter' to his wife, just after writing it—tried to read it rather, for his voice swelled and heaved, as if he were tossed up and down on an ocean as it subsides after a storm. As to the fondness for allegory, Edgar Poe declares in a contemporary criticism that he is infinitely too fond of it, and that he can never hope for popularity so long as he persists in it. "Indeed, his spirit of metaphor run mad is clearly imbibed from the phalanstery atmosphere in which he has been so long struggling for truth. Let him mend his pen, get a bottle of visible ink, come out from the Old Manse, cut Mr. Alcott, hang (if possible) the editor of the 'Dial,' and throw out of the window to the pigs all his odd numbers of the 'North-American Review.'" This is of course pitched in a tone of absurd exaggeration. The truth is, however, that the love of abstraction and allegory was a mood against which Hawthorne was often struggling, and as he himself says, making attempts to open an intercourse with the world. The result is that a progressive tendency from the abstract to the concrete can be traced through much of his work, and that his last work, 'Transformation,' so little represents the culmination of his powers that it is in certain aspects a distinct retrogression.

It appears that during or immediately after his college-days at Bowdoin, Hawthorne published anonymously a slight romance with the motto from Southey, "Wilt thou

go with me?" He was afterwards disgusted with this early work, and never acknowledged its authorship. But it possessed in a crude form many of the subsequent qualities of his style. It was a dim dreamy tale, full of the weird and the uncanny, and its characters were not so much persons as embodied passions, emotions, spiritual speculations. Here at the outset of his career, we find both allegory and abstract characterization. It is the same with many of his earlier tales. He appears, if not anxious to express a moral, at least unable to give his creations anything but the most shadowy and anæmic personality. They move across the pages with a stilted imitation of life, they are endowed with names as though they were really persons, but we instinctively feel that they have not the same flesh and bone as ourselves, and that they draw their breath from airs which never enter our lungs. Enormous is the interval which separates the best of the shorter tales from 'The Scarlet Letter' with its clear enunciation of practical moral problems and its terrible revelation of the anguish of a burdened conscience. After 'The Scarlet Letter' was published, we are told that Hawthorne received many confessions from men and women who had either committed or fancied that they had committed some great sin, a sufficient proof of the reality and concreteness of its main theme. A Quaker once wrote to the author to tell him that he knew him better than his best friend. Yet there was truth in Hawthorne's comment that his correspondent considerably over-estimated the extent of his intimacy with him. For, indeed, even in 'The Scarlet



Letter' there is much, as Mr. Henry James remarks, of "spheres and influences." Arthur Dimmesdale is real enough, but what are we to say of Roger Chillingworth, the aggrieved husband, who exercises so great an influence over the *dénouement* of the tale, and yet hovers only on the verge of actuality as an impalpable and ghostly Nemesis? Hawthorne is fond of making the tragic action of his characters depend on such shadowy personalities, and Chillingworth plays an identical part with the mysterious figure of the catacombs who persecutes Miriam in 'Transformation,' and Professor Westervelt who wields such an occult power over Zenobia in the 'Blithedale Romance.' Hester Prynne herself does not affect us like a woman who has loved and suffered for her love, because Hawthorne intentionally separates the present conjuncture, which it is his object to analyze, from the past whence it sprang, and which alone could give it causal justification. The effect on the mind is like that of Stesichorus' Helen, who did not go to Troy at all, but only went there in the shape of a pale and bodiless phantom. The triumph of this fanciful semi-morbid psychology is the elfin child, little Pearl, veritably a triumph, for she is so clearly the offspring of an immoral alliance, but for that very reason she is hardly a child at all, but the embodied moral of a wholesome sermon. Yet even here how wonderfully sure is the artistic touch of Hawthorne! What a morbid piece of imagination it is to make the child so fond of the letter of shame that she will not go to her mother unless she is wearing it on her bosom! How morbid and yet how

striking! Hawthorne is full of such touches, sometimes insisting on them with an almost painful emphasis, but rarely exceeding the artistic requirements of his picture.

A year after the publication of 'The Scarlet Letter,' Hawthorne has added to the concreteness of his personages in 'The House of the Seven Gables.' The shadowy Chillingworth has now become a firm-set, tyrannical reality in the shape of Judge Pyncheon; and the author has found a way of making his female characters more actual by the contrast between an elder and a younger, the younger to be the essence of sweetness and tenderness, and the elder to have harder lineaments, produced either by age or mental strength. Phœbe Pyncheon, too, has, besides her tenderness, a beneficent store of practical activity, and poor old Hephzibah commences her troubles by a crisis of pathetic reality when she degrades her lineage by opening a shop. Holgrave is thrown in to add to this effect as the representative of the pushing, indefatigable Yankee, who has nothing but his wits to make his way with in the world. Clifford remains as the representative of the shadows, and there is a half-intimated background of ancestral feud and mesmeric influence to keep the story within the limits prescribed by the author's peculiar genius. In the 'Blithedale Romance' we move to yet newer ground. Here is a basis of actual fact in the experiences of Hawthorne in the Brook Farm community, and Blithedale becomes no imaginary region, but a phenomenon which history has recognized. Of all the novels, this, though perhaps slightest in texture, has most of

sunniness, most of humorous enjoyment, as though for once the haunting devil had, for some two hundred pages at least, left Hawthorne's elbow. Coverdale is concrete enough; so, too, in ample measure is Hollingsworth; so, too, above all, is Zenobia. The same expedient is used for contrasting an older stronger woman with a younger weaker one; and, indeed, the relations of Zenobia to Priscilla are afterwards repeated in those of Miriam to Hilda in 'Transformation.' But there can be no question that of all the female characters Zenobia is the one that has the firmest outlines and the most insistent personality. In all dramatic characterization, it is women especially who suffer by being made too shadowy and bloodless. All their modes of self-manifestation, all the outlets of their influence, are so essentially bound up with their corporeal organization, the whole impress of their personality, at least to a masculine imagination, is so intimately connected with their bodily form and feature, that if they fail to be flesh and blood, we begin to be sceptical of their actuality. As has been already noticed, some of Hawthorne's women seem to shrink from crossing the borders of shadowland; but Zenobia at least is imperiously human in her sensuous beauty, in her passionate attachment, in her terrible despair. Rarely has Hawthorne allowed himself such touches as those by which he conveys to his reader the idea of the Blithedale heroine. See how she affects Miles Coverdale: "Zenobia was truly a magnificent woman. The homely simplicity of her dress could not conceal, nor scarcely diminish, the queenliness of her presence.—I know

not well how to express, that the native glow of colouring in her cheeks, and even the flesh-warmth over her round arms and what was visible of her full bust, in a word, her womanliness incarnated, compelled me sometimes to close my eyes, as if it were not quite the privilege of modesty to gaze at her." When we turn to 'Transformation,' we are struck by many differences in relation to the earlier romances. The scene, to begin with, is changed, and New England has been deserted for Italy. It is a curious proof of the many invisible ties which serve to connect Hawthorne with his native country that with the loss of the familiar background of Salem and Concord and the forest, there appears to be a corresponding loss of power. The many allusions to Italian scenery and the descriptions of notorious spots in Rome, however admirably they may fulfil the purposes of a superior guide-book, and however graceful they may be in themselves, hardly make up for the deficiency of the natural local colours. Sometimes they strike the reader as irritating interruptions, and indeed the story itself, as Mr. Henry James has remarked, has a tendency to lose itself in byways and straggle almost painfully in inconsecutive paragraphs. The characters again have become more shadowy. Miriam is not wholly a satisfactory creation, owing to the intentional obscurity in which the author has left both her past and her future; Kenyon is not especially life-like; and Donatello, though at times he strikes one as a happy fiction of poesy, at other times obtrudes too much his alien nature. The novel, lastly, has an obvious purpose, and the lesson of the



educative power of sin, whether it be considered as a moral one or no, interferes to some extent with the artistic character of the work. Yet such criticisms do not touch the main value of the book, and it is hardly matter for surprise that to many readers 'Transformation' appears as Hawthorne's masterpiece. The genius for style is as clearly there—perhaps more clearly there—than in his other works, and the impalpable charm of distinction and refinement rests on many pages of admirable writing. Still, we are not altogether surprised to find that the next step carries the author wholly back to the abstract and the allegorical; and however little we may have a right to judge the unfinished 'Septimius Felton,' it is easy to see that it would under no circumstances have reached the level of former productions.

Dramatist or no dramatist, there can be no question that Hawthorne was a consummate artist. His characters may often be wanting in opaqueness and solidity, but nothing can interfere with the extraordinary felicity and power of his scenes. The personages do not always stand out with distinctness, but the management of the incidents, the grouping of the accessories, the natural background of colour and tone and scenery, and all the 'staging,' so to speak, of the piece are alike admirable. Further than this, the insight into emotion and the perception of the contrasts of passion, though they often appear arbitrary and unnatural, strike the imagination with rare force and mastery. It will be better to select some of the finest passages for comparison, in order to observe the manner

in which Hawthorne produces his effects. Take the scene in 'The Scarlet Letter' in which Arthur Dimmesdale returns from his interview with Hester Prynne in the forest. The minister, after meeting once more the companion of his ancient sin, finds that his moral nature is temporarily perverted. He longs to utter to his deacon blasphemous suggestions about the communion supper. He is on the point of whispering to an elderly dame who has lost her husband and children some argument against the immortality of the soul. He is tempted to make some impure remark and give some wicked look to one of the purest maidens in his flock, and to join a drunken seaman in a volley of "good, round, solid, satisfactory and heaven-defying oaths." There is a horrible truth in this wonderful scene. Hawthorne has merely analyzed the power of mental reaction after some unusual strain of feeling and excitement—a common experience, but one which his genius has transfigured with unearthly light. Or, again, there is the long chapter in the 'House of the Seven Gables,' where Judge Pyncheon is described as lying dead in his chair. Here the effect is due to the contrast between the cold lifeless corpse, rigid on its chair, and the string of humorous taunts conveyed in the enumeration of the Judge's manifold worldly engagements for the day. Take another scene. In the 'Blithedale Romance,' Hollingsworth, Coverdale and Foster drag the midnight river for the body of Zenobia, who has committed suicide. What is it that makes the scene so powerfully tragic? It is partly the presence of Silas Foster with his utterly coarse

and rustic imaginings, as an effectual contrast to the spiritual agony of the other characters. "It puts me in mind of my young days," remarked Silas, "when I used to steal out of bed to go bobbing for hornpouts and eels. Heigh-ho! Well; life and death together make sad work for us all! Then I was a boy, bobbing for fish; and now I'm getting to be an old fellow, and here I be, groping for a dead body! I tell you what, lads, if I thought anything had really happened to Zenobia, I should feel kind o' sorrowful." What a wonderful touch that is! Hawthorne knows the value of sudden contrasts of the humorous and the grave, and when Zenobia's body is found, he does not hesitate to suggest that if she had only known the ugly circumstances of death and how ill it became her, she would no more have committed the dreadful act than have exhibited herself to a public assembly in a badly-fitting garment. Another powerful scene has before been referred to. It is that of the murder of the tormentor of Miriam by Donatello in 'Transformation.' Here the strength of the situation is not dependent on the realism by which the act itself is described, but, as usual in Hawthorne, on the indication of the after-effects. The sense of a sin in which both have participated leads at first to an ecstasy of joy. Miriam and Donatello go hand in hand as though the murder had not only made them irrevocably one, but enduringly happy. Perhaps, after all, the finest single scene of all is the night-vigil of the hero of 'The Scarlet Letter' on the scaffold; but in that the effect depends more on the imaginative vividness with which the

picture is drawn than on the subtle suggestions of contrasted feelings, on which Hawthorne principally relies.

It is needless to hold up Hawthorne to obloquy, as Mr. Hutton has done, for not seeing the rights and wrongs of slave emancipation. It was reprehensible, no doubt, for our author to have suggested that a noble movement had some of "the mistiness of a philanthropic theory." But it must be remembered that Hawthorne was a Democrat, not a Republican, and that he had a warm attachment for General Pierce, who had identified himself with the party who desired above all things to preserve the Union. The real defence, however, is that it was impossible for a man of Hawthorne's organization to feel any deep interest in contemporary politics. He had an instinctive dislike of politicians and philanthropists. "I detest," he writes in the first volume of his *American Note-books*, "all offices—all, at least, that are held upon a political tenure, and I want nothing to do with politicians. Their hearts wither away and die out of their bodies. Their consciences are turned to india-rubber, or to some substance as black as that, and which will stretch as much. One thing, if no more, I have gained by my Custom-house experience—to know a politician. It is a knowledge which no previous thought or power of sympathy could have taught me; because the animal, or the machine rather, is not in nature." Or again, on the subject of philanthropists, in reference to Hollingsworth:—

"They have no heart, no sympathy, no reason, no conscience. They will keep no friend, unless he make himself the mirror of



their purpose: they will smite and slay you, and trample your dead corpse underfoot, all the more readily if you take the first step with them, and cannot take the second and the third, and every other step of their terribly straight path. They have an idol, to which they consecrate themselves high-priest and deem it holy work to offer sacrifices of whatever is most precious, and never once seem to suspect, so cunning has the devil been with them, that this false deity, in whose iron features, immitigable to all the rest of mankind, they see only benignity and love, is but a spectrum of the very priest himself, projected upon the surrounding darkness."

It is on this side, perhaps, that we can see more clearly than on any other what his French critic, in the '*Revue des Deux Mondes*,' M. Emile Montégut, means by calling Hawthorne "un romancier pessimiste." He certainly had his pessimistic moments. "Let us acknowledge it wiser, if not more sagacious, to follow out one's day-dream to its natural consummation, although, if the vision have been worth the having, it is certain never to be consummated otherwise than by a failure." Or again, "We contemplated our existence as hopefully as if the soil beneath our feet had not been fathom-deep with the dust of deluded generations, on every one of which, as on ourselves, the world had imposed itself as a hitherto unwedded bride;" a noticeable passage, because seemingly framed in reference to Emerson's optimism, who had told 'the American scholar' that he gave him "the universe a virgin to-day." But in reality Hawthorne had too much humour to be either a Leopardi or a Schopenhauer. His inquisitorial coldness, and his perfectly neutral analysis of character give him a certain airy scepticism and a kind of cynical aloofness; but such a temper stands at the opposite pole to pessimism,

which is dogmatically and savagely in earnest. He describes himself with felicitous exactness in the attitude of Miles Coverdale. He was a devoted epicure of emotions, and on such moods as robbed the actual world of its solidity he was resolved to pause, and enjoy the moral sillabub until quite dissolved away.

## “ROBERT BROWNING, WRITER OF PLAYS.”

“And Robert Browning, you writer of plays,  
Here’s a subject made to your hand!”

*Dramatic Romances (A Light Woman)*, vol. iv.

IN an early volume of his collected poems Mr. Browning asserts that “their contents are always dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons.” Dramatic in principle they undoubtedly are; such strictly lyrical and undramatic pieces as ‘Christmas Eve’ and ‘Easter Day’ are exceptions to the general rule, which cannot be recalled without a moment’s thought. How clearly in the author’s own conception dramatic power is the quality characteristic of his poetic genius, may be gathered from his fondness for such titles as ‘Dramatis Personæ,’ ‘Dramatic Idylls,’ ‘Men and Women,’ ‘Dramatic Romances,’ and so forth. But the dramatic spirit is one thing, and the power of composing a drama is another. No one would deny that Browning is a dramatist of a high order, and yet many would doubt whether he is what, for purposes of convenient distinction, may be called a ‘practical’ dramatist. ‘The Ring and the

Book' is quite enough evidence of the possession of the first attribute; it is above all a study of character, in its contrasts between Guido and Pompilia, Caponsacchi and Pope Innocent; the whole treatment and setting are dramatic in the highest degree (as, *e. g.*, in 'Half-Rome,' 'Other Half-Rome,' and the 'Tertium Quid'), being throughout occupied with the vigorous presentment of character in active and generally malevolent manifestations. But when the reader turns from this voluminous poem to one of the professed dramas—say to 'Pippa Passes' or 'Colombe's Birthday'—he is struck with the unreality and impracticability of the play, and the doubt crosses his mind whether Browning can be said to have the dramatic capacity in the limited sense. It is worth considering in what sense such a distinction can be maintained, and to what extent it can be said that Browning possesses the first gift without the second.

Browning is a dramatist for the one and sufficient reason that he is, above all, the student of humanity. Humanity he draws with a loving and patient hand, but on the one condition that it shall be humanity in active and passionate exercise. Not for him, the beauty of repose; the still quiet lights of meditation, removed from the slough and welter of actual struggle, make no appeal; the apathetic calm of a normal human being, exercised on daily uninteresting tasks, is to him well-nigh incomprehensible; storms and thunder, wind and lightning, passion and fury, and masterful strength, something on which he can set the seal of his own rugged, eloquent,



amorphous verse; something which he can probe and analyze and wrap up in the twists and turns of his most idiomatic, most ungrammatical style—these are the subjects which he loves to handle. And so those whose eyes are dazzled by this excess of light, or who lose their breath in this whirl of hurrying ideas, call him unintelligible; while those quiet souls who look for form and measure and control in verse deny that such uncouth and turgid lines are poetry at all. That Browning should have essayed two transcripts from Euripides is a fact not without significance for the critic, for he has thereby opened to us the secrets of his own dramatic aptitudes. For with him, as with Euripides, the humanity he paints is not the dignified, selfish man of Tennyson or Sophocles, with views on ‘the decorous’ or ‘the befitting,’ and a conventional regard for respectable deportment, whether towards himself or to his gods; but the wilder, less commonplace, more developed human being, who hates with a will, and loves with a will, regardless of consequence, who cannot deceive himself as to his own motives and despises external morality, a humanity which dares and sins and suffers, and makes a mock, if need be, of gods and heaven.

It is Browning, more than any one else, who makes us realize the volcano of dangerous forces which simmers beneath the smiling commonplaces of ordinary life and established social usage. Humanity with him is not the sententious and balanced hero of classicalism, nor the feverish melodramatic idealist of romantic literature. The times of Corneille and Racine for him are done with

and gone; even the imaginative flights of Walter Scott and Victor Hugo have become 'somewhat musty.' He lives in an age of positivism; the mighty shades of Honoré de Balzac and George Sand will not disavow their poetic disciple, for he works with the same analytic tools, and digs deep in the same mine of psychological study. The duty of man is to work out his vein thoroughly and to the full. Is he in love? Then he must love surpassingly, absorbingly, recklessly, as in 'Cristina,' or 'Evelyn Hope,' or 'The Last Ride together.' Is he conscious that he is hampered by circumstance and friends from reaching his goal? Then he must drive through the crust of fate and over-ride his circumstances and his friends at all hazards, as in 'Waring,' or 'The Flight of the Duchess.' Is he aiming at some end, dark and unlovely, an end which no one else can sympathize with, some "round squat turret, without a counterpart in the whole world"? Then he must press on through falsehood and squalor and dismay, though all his companions fall off one by one, as in 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.' Is he a poet with all the yearnings and isolation and disappointments of a poet's career? Then he must carry out the poetic task through succeeding cycles of egotism and altruism, as in 'Sordello.' Is he mad for revenge on some foe who has wronged him? Then in God's name let him wreak his vengeance to the full, and draw his moral lesson afterwards, as in 'Before and After.' Is he bent on some task of moral healing and regeneration? Then let him stand for hours over the man he longs to save; let him urge

and ply him with every drug and potion known in the moral pharmacopœia, till his sweat be like drops of blood, as in that magnificent dramatic lyric of 'Saul.' If drama be the vivid portraiture of a masterful humanity—madly tender, madly passionate, recklessly dying—then Browning indeed possesses the dramatic quality.

But from this to the power of dramatic manipulation is a long step. If we take any of the poems, almost at haphazard, we notice a certain idiosyncratic way of treating the circumstances of the case, a certain mannerism of expression in the thoughts, a certain eccentricity in presenting the motives of hero and heroine, without which the poet appears unable to work. Now it is a modern sentiment in an ancient setting, a widely liberal view put in the mouth of a narrowly religious character, as, for instance, in 'Master Hugues of Saxe Gotha,' or the 'Death in the Desert,' or perhaps 'Saul.' Now it is the seeming impossibility to get away from his own poetic character, as in 'Waring' or 'Sordello.' In the last most enigmatical poem, which always possesses a melancholy interest—as the bottom of each page seems to mark the successive grave-stones of earnest readers, who could get thus far and no farther—we have an explicit connection traced in the long digression at the end of the third book between the poet himself and the character he is depicting. But all this is not unreasonable in lyrical romances, whatever dramatic title the author chooses to give them. It is in the dramas themselves that the real characteristics of Browning's dramatic presentation should properly be

studied. In these a distinction may be drawn between a poem like 'Pippa Passes,' which, though regularly divided into acts, is really unactable, and such pieces as 'The Blot on the 'Scutcheon,' 'Strafford,' and 'The Return of the Druses,' which are dramas in the formal sense of the term.\* Midway between these two extremes lie the dramatic sketches entitled 'In a Balcony,' 'A Soul's Tragedy,' and 'Colombe's Birthday,' while 'King Victor and King Charles,' and 'Luria' approach to, though they do not quite reach, the formal requirements of the drama. In each of these intermediate plays there is such a smallness of interest, such a slenderness of plot, and so limited an interaction of character, that it would be hard to conceive of any theatrical audience, except possibly those which could in Germany bear 'Nathan der Weise' on the stage, listening to them with any attention or pleasure.

The essence of drama is, of course, play of character, either the crossing or recrossing of different lines of interest as a number of characters work out the plot, or the evolution of a single character through the influence or antagonism of others. If a single character, slowly developing, be represented in a series of monologues, it is doubtless interesting as a psychological study, but it is not a drama. The contrast of character is essential, a condition which carries with it the necessity of consistency in portraiture. Now, to Browning also the drama is an interaction of characters, but the interaction is one which

\* I find it impossible to call 'The Ring and the Book' a drama in this limited sense.



he interprets in his own way. The characters are different mouthpieces of the poet himself, different shadows of his one personality, all alike affecting the same turns of expression and thought; and the contrast, such as it is, is between the various shifting phases and feeling of his own richly endowed mind. In a play of Browning, the hero, naturally enough, talks like Browning; but so too does the heroine, so does the villain, so do the populace. Contrast there certainly is, but not contrast in the ordinary sense. There is none of that impersonal touch which we have in Shakespeare, and which makes one know Shakespeare's characters, while what Shakespeare's own character may be remains a mystery. Browning is too personal, too 'subjective,' too instinct with himself; he cannot project himself outward, so to speak, in his creations; he cannot forget himself by means of a wide human sympathy. Dramatic creator in this sense he certainly is not; in his noblest creations are to be found fragments of a mind, all bearing a single stamp; in his best characters he remains himself.

But then, such is the artist's gift, this is forgotten over and over again owing to the singularly rich and versatile endowments of Browning's mind. In the mouth of his picturesque and interesting heroes—especially if the plays be read singly and after some interval—the strained and intricate language in which Browning delights does not at once appear inappropriate. And there are many passages in Browning's dramatic writing (which contrasts most favourably with the rest of his work in this respect)

where the language is powerfully clear and simple, and in these the absence of any real characterization remains unsuspected. But Browning cannot be either clear or simple for more than a few moments, and directly the style becomes idiosyncratic, we know with whom we have to deal. Listen to the retainer's talk in 'The Blot on the 'Scutcheon.'

"Our master takes his hand,  
Richard and his white staff are on the move,  
Back fall our people—'tsh—there's Timothy  
Sure to get tangled in his ribbon ties,  
And Peter's cursed rosette's a-coming off!"

Nothing could be better or more life-like; but now—

"I don't see wherefore Richard and his troop  
Of silk and silver varlets there, should find  
Their perfumed selves so indispensable  
On high days."

Their perfumed selves so indispensable! It reminds one of Hamlet's waterfly, Osric, rather than of Tresham's retainers. Or let us take another instance, how a bystander—one of the populace be it remembered—is able to describe Ogniben's demeanour and language in 'A Soul's Tragedy':—

"Here are you who, I make sure, glory exceedingly in knowing the noble nature of the soul, its divine impulses, and so forth; and with such a knowledge you stand, as it were, armed to encounter the natural doubts and fears as to that same inherent nobility, that are apt to waylay us, the weaker ones, in the road of life. And when we look eagerly to see them fall before you, lo, round you wheel, only the left hand gets the blow; one proof of the soul's nobility destroys simply another proof, quite as good, of the same. Our gaping friend, the burgess

yonder, does not want the other kind of kingship, that consorts in understanding better than his fellows this and similar points of human nature, nor to roll under his tongue this sweeter morsel still,—the feeling that through immense philosophy, he does *not* feel, he rather thinks, above you and me!” And so chatting they glided off arm in arm.

Roll under his tongue this sweeter morsel still! Fancy a bystander, one of the populace, calling such talk as this ‘chatting’! Or once more, listen to Phene in ‘Pippa Passes,’—Phene, the young Greek girl, a daughter of the old hag, Natalia, “white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest,” as the student describes her:—

“Even you perhaps  
Cannot take up, now you have once let fall,  
The music’s life, and me along with that,  
No, or you would! We’ll stay then, as we are  
Above the world.”

“What rises is myself,  
Not me the shame and suffering: but they sink,  
Are left, I rise above them.”

“Yet your friends, speaking of you, used that smile,  
That hateful smirk of boundless self-conceit  
Which seems to take possession of the world  
And make of God a tame confederate,  
Purveyor to their appetites.”

Fine lines, assuredly, but as little appropriate to Phene as they would be to Pippa herself, for all that she is the heroine.

The dramatic presentation of character requires more than skilful and striking speeches, with a faintly outlined background of difficult and dangerous circumstances. Action is needed, the pressure of other minds, the alter-

nate yielding and conquering of a human unit, battling with an overmastering fate in a series of impressive scenes, or at least the gathering up of many threads of separate interests in the supreme interest of the hero. The best instance in Browning of this conception of a drama is, curiously enough, in 'Pippa Passes,' the least dramatic in form of all his plays. Here we have four separate romances, Ottima and Sebald, Phene and Jules, Luigi and his mother, Monsignor and Ugo (to say nothing of Bluphocks and the Austrian police), strung on the single thread of Pippa's New Year's Day. Pippa is the 'better mind' of all these sinning and struggling personalities: it is her passing, the sound of her voice and the melody of her songs, which mark in each successive case the highest point in the dramatic situation. The blithe girl from the silk-mills brings to each their redemption, and on her depends, and from her dates, their possible amelioration. Here are the true elements of a drama with the fine moral of the endless powers of good which a frank and simple nature possesses, wave after wave of blessing thrown off in widening circles from the single worthy character in the play. Yet 'Pippa Passes' remains, owing to the capriciousness of its form, a poem to be read in the study rather than a play to be seen on the stage. In other dramas no attempt even at action is made. 'Luria' affords a notable example. Luria, the Moor, is a fine open character: he is the true man, the honest and gallant soldier; round him are all the tricks and arts of Florence, plot and counter-plot, suspicion and intrigue, on one side Domizia, and on



the other, Braccio. In him, therefore, the reader looks to see that spectacle for gods and men, the good man struggling with fate. But in all the scenes which represent the development of the catastrophe there is no movement, no scenic interest, no picture for the eye. There is indeed much admirable writing, and many lines which send the blood up to the cheek, without which Browning would not be Browning. But in all five acts there is absolutely no dramatic situation, unless Luria poisoning himself in the solitude of his own tent may be said to be one. The matter is best seen in a couple of contrasts. The character of the plain soldier, struggling with a world of deception, is in some respects comparable with that of Harold in Tennyson's drama. The position of a successful captain, tempted to turn his arms against the city whose soldiers he leads, reminds one of Coriolanus. But where in Browning's play is the interest of Coriolanus' mother and wife? Shall it be found in Domizia, who remains, it must be confessed, somewhat of an enigma, with her change from feminine vindictiveness to masculine largemindedness? Or in the wearisome astuteness of Braccio, who fails in the attempt to pull the wires of a Florentine jury, moved to forgiveness by the sudden pleading of Luria's adversary, Tiburzio? And though indeed in Tennyson we miss the sure Shakespearian touch, there is not in him the same austerity of formal dialogue which we find in Browning. He knows that to understand a soldier's character we want to have some of the crash of battle in our ears. Nothing could be finer in its way than the rapid descriptive touches

of the battle of Senlac in ‘Harold,’ conveyed in the scene between Edith and Stigand, where, breaking the quick interchange of question and answer, are heard the Norman and English war-cries, and the monotonous chanting of the monks of Waltham. But such appeal to the eye as well as ear Browning will have none of.

The same limited range of interest is found in ‘King Victor and King Charles,’ where the main point is presumably the contrast between the old king and the young king, the father and the son. Victor resigns the crown to Charles, but cannot be content to live in retirement, and plots to return. He is foiled, partly by the somewhat sudden change in D’Ormea, the minister, partly by death. The sole interest is the contrast of the two kings. Polyxena, Charles’s wife, is described in Browning’s introduction as possessed of “a noble and right woman’s manliness,” but in the play she is a mere sketch of a character, as far as dramatic purposes are concerned. D’Ormea is first a rascal and then becomes better advised, but no subtle links are indicated to connect the early rascality with the subsequent rectitude, any more than they are indicated in the case of Domizia in ‘Luria.’ Throughout the play nothing of the nature of a ‘situation’ occurs. It is a literary drama at most, and perhaps even so scarcely a good one of its kind. To speak plainly, it is too dull and uninteresting. Nor is it the case that Browning is avowedly only writing dramas for the study, or that he is insensible to the legitimate scenic effects of a play.\* A purely literary drama always

\* ‘A Blot on the ‘Scutcheon’ was brought out at Drury Lane on

strikes one as somewhat incongruous, and it is no less than a national misfortune that of the three contemporary poets, Swinburne, Browning, and Tennyson, only the last should even care to have his dramas presented on the stage. The result is only too obvious. The 'practical playwrights,' in whose hands the matter is left, being perhaps weakest on the literary side, either borrow their literary matter wholesale, or entirely throw overboard the literary elements of drama for the sake of scenic. But in 'Strafford,' at all events, Browning gives us a composition in which there are scenes strongly appealing to the eye. The scene at the end of Act III., where Strafford, amidst an excited crowd of his own adherents and the Presbyterian partisans, reaches the doors of the House of Lords, through which we catch glimpses of Hampden and Pym at the bar, possesses the elements of truly pictorial drama. Here too are lines of wonderful grace and beauty: one of them, put into Strafford's mouth, and ending Act II., haunts the memory with its perfect melody:—

“Night has its first, supreme, forsaken star.”

Nor could there well be a more pathetic touch than where, in the midst of Strafford's anxious debating with Balfour and Charles as to his own escape, and the movement towards the door, there occurs the sudden reminiscence of the two children in the next room:—

“Now! but tread softly—children are at play  
In the next room. Precede: I follow.”

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Feb. 11, 1843, and failed. It was represented also on March 8th, 1838. Macready acted in 'Strafford,' but with limited success.

At the close of the drama, however, which surely might have been made so fine, Browning seems designedly to shrink from the natural scenic catastrophe. All that we have is a couple of contrasted speeches from Strafford and Pym, and the curtain falls, not on the properly *dramatic* interest of Strafford's own personality, but on an *historical* interest, the prophecy of the next death which England's salvation may entail. "England, I am thine own," says Pym.

"dost thou exact  
That service? I obey thee to the end."

This is a characteristic instance of the predominance of the literary and historic interest over the dramatic; for we observe that the feeling left on the mind is not the pathos of Strafford's loyalty and its melancholy issue, but the external and superfluous interest that Pym and his fellows may have next time to strike at a nobler prey.\*

In the choice of subjects for drama, one of Browning's least pleasing characteristics is discovered. It can hardly be denied that there appears in his poems, over and over again, a deliberate preference for the irregular and unhealthy phenomena of human nature and life. Here and there Browning is a naturalist, according to the most rigorous standard of M. Zola. He seems to lay more stress on passion than love, on hypocrisy than truth, on disease than health, on vice than virtue. It is not the moral

\* In later editions, Mr. Browning has ended with a line in Strafford's mouth, "O God, I shall die first—I shall die first!"



Puritan alone who would so judge him. Undoubtedly the dramatic elements in life are, more often than not, concerned with the abnormal relations of mankind to one another; this is one of the reasons why the professed moralist is usually intolerant of dramatic art. But it is not the moral point of view but the artistic which is here of importance, and if Browning is to be condemned for 'realism' it must be because it is inartistic, not because it paints immoral relations. That excessive stress on the ugly and the morbid is inartistic, surely needs no demonstration. The case stands just as if we were judging a landscape or a portrait. A successful picture is one in which lifelike detail is strictly subordinated to general effect of light, tone, and colour. A successful drama is one in which plot and counterplot, intrigue and passion, are subordinated to those general relations of life which we call human and natural. Life is not all meanness or vice, any more than a cornfield is all pre-Raphaelite poppies, or a human face all photographic moles and wrinkles. Now a dramatic writer who lays emphatic stress on the morbid phases of life is guilty of this kind of inartistic realism: he is painting not on the broad lines of a general effect which is what we see and feel to be 'natural,' but isolating one or two ugly particulars, so that the true perspective is distorted. It is to this realistic level that Browning sometimes descends. An almost inexplicable love of the irregular and unhealthy spoils some of his best effects. In one of the finest of his shorter plays, the 'Blot on the 'Scutcheon,' the whole interest turns on the immoral

relations of the hero and heroine. What makes the drama is the fact that Mildred and Mertoun, who are about to be formally married, have in reality consummated their union before. Perhaps so far the situation is not dramatically illegitimate; but when we find that these two characters began their clandestine meetings when they were almost children, that they are not the characters of mingled goodness and badness which experience in such matters might create, but represented as living models of purity ("a depth of purity immovable," is the expression of Tresham, the murderer of the youthful gallant), it is impossible to avoid the criticism that such a situation, ending as it does in a triple death, is almost grotesquely abnormal. In 'Pippa Passes' we have even stronger indications of the same characteristic trait. Ottima and Sebald have purchased their guilty meetings by the murder of Ottima's husband. Phene, who becomes by the devices of jealous fellow-students Jules's wife, is a young Greek girl, a daughter of that hag, Natalia, so she swears, who "helps us to models at three lire an hour;" Monsignor is a vicious hypocrite; Ugo, a blood-stained accomplice in crime; Bluphocks is so repulsive a monstrosity that the poet has in his own defence to quote the apologetic text that "he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good." Nor in the other dramas is there any lack of suggestion of the same unhealthy background, even where vice does not form the main interest. There is the usual hint of the baseness and meanness of humanity in 'The Druses' in the plots of the Prefect and the Chapter; in 'Colombe's Birthday' in

the Courtiers, in 'A Soul's Tragedy' in the character of Chiappino: sometimes a repulsive touch mars a pretty picture of love. When Anael is describing the growing relations between herself and Djabal—

" Oh, my happiness  
Rounds to the full, whether I choose or no !  
His eyes met mine, he was about to speak,  
His hand grew damp,"

is it not a wilful realism to add that unpleasant fact of a 'damp hand,' which physiologists tell us is the external counterpart and sign of strong emotion ?

The reason for this love of the unnatural and the morbid is not far to seek. Browning is a student of the shady side of life because he is so disposed to keen psychological analysis, and it is obvious how dependent psychology is on the study of pathological states. But the relation of psychology to drama is like that of anatomy to the statuary's art; it is a necessary propædæutic. To bring psychological analysis in its raw and crude state into drama, is to introduce a page, say of Herbert Spencer, into one of Shelley's lyrics; for a piece of artistic work is eminently synthetic—the putting together and reconstruction of elements elsewhere disentangled. Analysis must precede but not form part of the completed work, just as the scaffolding must not be built into the finished house. It is indeed the very crown and perfection of Art that it should appear so independent of, and yet so necessarily involve, previous analytic study. How much psychological analysis—whether conscious or unconscious—must have

preceded the creation of a Macbeth, or an Othello, or, above all, a Hamlet! Even in the last-mentioned character, where there is most of the mental disentanglement of motives and desires in monologues and soliloquies, the psychology is strictly subordinated to the drama. Why else should we have so many commentaries on Hamlet, so many monographs to prove exactly what his character was or was not? But Browning's characters need no commentary. The poet himself is, in the speeches which he puts into their mouths, the most unwearied and exhaustive of commentators. Luria takes eighty lines of patient self-analysis to reveal himself to the audience in Act IV. before he drinks the fatal phial. King Victor, when he returns to the palace he had bequeathed to his son Charles, explains himself in a speech of eighty-two lines. When Constance is expounding to Norbert (in 'In a Balcony') the mental condition of the Queen, her analysis extends over fifty-three lines in one speech and sixty-one in a second. Djabal and Anael, in one of their most critical meetings (in 'The Druses'), when Anael is trying to get rid of her worldly leanings towards Loys, and Djabal is in the throes of conscious hypocrisy, commence their interview with fifty-four lines of commentary on their own motives, conveyed in two asides to the audience. Let any actor or actress imagine how he or she is to represent a lovers' meeting which commences in so inauspicious a fashion! In all this there is too much of the art which adds to nature and too little of the higher art which nature makes.



Nor is Browning's analysis of such a kind that he who runs may read. On the contrary, it is most intricate and involved, sounding the depths of human passion and measuring the windings of the human intellect in language which sufficiently taxes the understanding when read in the study, and which is often simply incomprehensible when listened to for the first time. There is no such an explorer of the human mind as Browning; he is, above all, the mental philosopher, the acute psychologist, the unflinching vivisector, the literary surgeon who wields the knife over the quivering nerves and flesh of humanity. And hence the character of which Browning is conspicuously fond is the philosophic student of life, like Ogniben in 'A Soul's Tragedy,' or Melchior in 'Colombe's Birthday,' or D'Ormea in 'King Victor and King Charles.' Browning has in these matters the true instincts of a metaphysician, but the metaphysical instinct does not always lead to the best or the truest dramatic portraiture. Hence it is rarely possible to feel quite at home with Browning's heroes; the reason probably being that there are certain stages of the ideal, at which all dramatic treatment becomes absurd, the material means of the theatre being inadequate to its representation.

In the delineation of character it is curious to observe how much more important and interesting the male characters are made than the female. It is over his Chiappinos, his Straffords, his Victors, his Lurias, his Djabals, that Browning spends most care and elaboration. There are few good acting parts for women in his dramas.

If we take twelve of his female characters, we shall find that six (Eulalia, Polyxena, Gwendolen, Colombe, Pippa, and Lady Carlyle) are all more or less mere sketches of character, three (Ottima, Phene, and Domizia) have some moral taint, and only three are carefully drawn and interesting characters, viz. Constance, Mildred, and Anael. Of these three, the first appears in the scene ‘In a Balcony,’ which, splendidly written as it is, can hardly be called actable, owing to the slenderness of treatment; \* the second is the principal figure in the ‘Blot on the ‘Scutcheon,’ who has entered on an intrigue with the hero before the action of the play commences; the third, Anael, though she commits murder and suicide, is undoubtedly a true, womanly, and dramatic creation. It would be difficult to say what is Browning’s view as to the key-note of a woman’s character. If one may judge from Constance and Colombe and Anael, it would appear to be self-sacrifice—the endless giving up of herself to the man. The same lesson is brought out in a somewhat unpleasing way in other passages. A moral which Browning seems rather fond of in describing the relations of man to woman is that the man is capable of loving many women (witness ‘Any Wife to Any Husband,’ ‘James Lee’s Wife,’ ‘Fifine at the Fair’), while the woman can only surrender herself to the one particular man. It would be interesting to know what some of the ladies who study Browning think of this very masculine moral.

\* ‘In a Balcony’ has been acted recently in St. George’s Hall with Miss Alma Murray in the title rôle.

However slightly the women may be drawn, the male characters are almost uniformly psychological studies of great care and detail. This is true not only of the large and more obtrusive personalities, but also of the subordinate. Chiappino, for instance, who appears in the slight sketch called 'A Soul's Tragedy,' is a study of the demoralization of an enlightened but selfish democrat. Tresham, in the 'Blot on the 'Scutcheon,' is a type of the aristocrat, narrow-minded, but gallant, jealous of his family's honour. Prince Berthold, in 'Colombe's Birthday,' is the cold and scheming man of ambition, who takes love as he takes everything else, as an instrument solely of successful progress. In 'Luria' we have the outlines of a contrast on the one hand between two soldier-characters, the simple Moor and the more subtle Florentine who preceded him in the command, and on the other hand between two Florentines, Puccio, who though subtle is generous, and Braccio, who is subtle and heartless. King Victor is one of the best creations of all—the prince who, full of fire, audacity, and dissimulation, thinks, and falsely thinks, that a life spent in battle and diplomatic scheming can suddenly be changed to one of rural simplicity and retirement.

In such characters as Strafford and Djabal the psychology is deeper and the analysis more careful. Nothing can be more pathetically tragic than the spectacle of a man who, like King Charles's minister, attempts to benefit his country by measures which his country's destiny has condemned. Contradictory motives are struggling for the

mastery, early friendship battling with a subsequent duty, old associations with affectionate loyalty. On the one side are Pym and Hampden, ranged with all the new-born forces of a country waking to the consciousness of its freedom. On the other an almost strained sense of devotion to a worthless and fickle monarch in the midst of a corrupt and intriguing court, backed by the doubtful tenderness of a Lady Carlyle. The drama works up to its close with the great problem of Strafford's duty left unsolved. There is no absolute duty, no absolute standard of judgment; to be on Pym's side is to forecast the issues of a doubtful future; to be on Charles's side is to listen to voices that seem nearer and dearer—love, loyalty, and conscience. Here is a situation of truly dramatic interest. We feel the contrast in the two final speeches, and balance alternate sympathy with each. "Have I done well?" says Pym.

"Speak, England! whose sole sake  
I still have laboured for, with disregard  
To my own heart."

And Strafford answers:—

"I have loved England too; we'll meet then, Pym!  
As well die now! Youth is the only time  
To think and to decide on a great course:  
Manhood with action follows: but 'tis dreary  
To have to alter our whole life in age—  
The time past, the strength gone! as well die now.  
When we meet, Pym, I'd be set right, not now!"

Noble and true speeches, to both of which in chorus fashion we would fain assent. We would suffer with Strafford and share the aspirations of Pym.



But 'Strafford' is not so fine a drama as 'The Druses,' nor is the character of its hero equal in subtlety to the character of Djabal. Djabal is a hypocrite and a hero by turns; he half believes in his mission to lead his people home, and yet knows that his prophetic garb is an imposture. Sometimes the nakedness of his deceit stands revealed, sometimes his right to command is based on the true feeling that he is intellectually superior to his tribe. Must not a people be deceived by some Platonic 'noble lie' for their good? Is not his claim to be Hakeem the one chance which the Druses have to regain the cedars of Lebanon? Is not he at heart unselfish, statesmanlike, patriotic? And the touchstone of all his sophisms is a woman's devotion:—

“I with my Arab instinct, thwarted ever  
By my Frank policy,—and with, in turn,  
My Frank brain thwarted by my Arab heart—  
While these remained in equipoise, I lived  
Nothing: had either been predominant,  
As a Frank schemer or an Arab mystic,  
I had been something: now each has destroyed  
The other, and behold from out their crash,  
A third and better nature rises up,  
My mere man's nature!”

Anael at least must know the truth, Anael, who is trying all the while to make herself love him for no other reason than because he is her country's prophet, who is seeking to drown her girl-like leanings towards Loys in the blood of the Prefect, who is desiring to rise on the stepping-stones of her dead love to the higher levels of godhead. Anael is perhaps the one thoroughly admirable and life-

like woman's character in Browning's drama, and perhaps it would be hardly unjust to add that 'The Return of the Druses' is the one magnificently elaborated play, magnificent alike in the scenic display of its acts, the evolution of its characters, and the force and eloquence of its literature. There could hardly be a more interesting spectacle for a generation which despairs of its contemporary dramatists than a representation of 'The Druses.' When Shakespeare runs its thousand and one nights, perhaps Browning's drama—literary, academic, impracticable, and “caviare to the general”—may yet be found to have “its first, supreme, forsaken star.”

## MR. SWINBURNE'S POETRY.

THE strong side of a nation's character, some French critic has observed, is often the weak side of its poetry. The remark has essential justice, though in a perverted form; for the truth would seem to be, that when the strong side of national character is not represented in its poetic art, then we may be sure that such poetry as may be produced is not conspicuously national. On the other hand, it is very rare that there is such complete accordance between character and artistic product as can assure us that the one is the effect of which the other is the cause. Whenever such union is realized there is what the Germans call a genuine art-epoch. History teaches us that such periods are short-lived, and whatever causes philosophers of æsthetics may assign, one thing is clear, that it is only in times of greatly superabundant energy that the national forces issue in artistic creation. The sudden brilliance of Greek art, the capricious activities of mediæval Italy, the glow and glory of Elizabethan literature, all tell the same tale. When art is recommended or defended 'for art's sake,' there is the beginning of the end.

If it be not the spontaneous overflow of a restless power, which neither asks the reason of its exercise, nor craves the acknowledgment of a specific end, then it may be 'precious,' or 'thankworthy,' or 'divine'; it may exhaust all the adjectives of an enthusiast's vocabulary, but it is not national.

The modern poetry of England has a curiously artificial air when judged by this standard. Once, and once only, in the history of English literature was a strongly-marked national character wedded to a perfect artistic expression. The bride was the drama: she had as wedding guests men like Raleigh, Sidney, Bacon, and Essex; while the high-priests and grooms of the marriage ceremony were Marlowe and Shakespeare, Jonson and Fletcher, Webster and Ford. In a modern day the leading poets have characteristics which, so far from being representatively English, are in reality alien and exotic. Nowhere do the forensic and rhetorical tendencies of Englishmen, their measured activities, their unmeasured emotions, the majestic poise and balance of their diction, the illimitable wealth of their language find better artistic expression than in the drama. But our modern poets are not conspicuously successful in drama. The strong side of modern English life is its science, its practicalness, its sanity. But the poets are not run in this mould; they are overthoughtful, as Browning—a gift or defect which is not English but German; they are over-refined and pretty, as Tennyson—a characteristic which he shares with the Italians; they are over-sensuous, as Swinburne—not in



this instance alone reminding us of his French models. It is not in any spirit of disrespect that such judgment is passed. One can but judge a literature by its own highest realization in history, and if such standard makes us speak lightly of honoured names, the fault is not ours nor theirs, but the solitary and cruel pre-eminence of Shakespeare.

Poetic art has possibly other functions than to be national. It is above all things cosmopolitan and catholic. And even though its more modern forms may hardly lay claim to such vague though unlimited empire, they may at least make apology that no art can be representative of materialism. In this our modern poets are undoubtedly right. A few years ago the attempt to make science speak the language of common human emotion and feeling was made in her later novels by George Eliot. A more definite effort to idealize the philosophy of Herbert Spencer in rhythmical verse, to find the poetic equivalents for 'environment' and 'social medium,' and 'change from homogeneity to heterogeneity,' bore the name of that talented agnostic, Miss Bevington. Such efforts are not supremely happy, and so far as materialism has conquered or is conquering the national tone and temper, poets are right to disregard the current philosophy and abandon themselves to their own fine careless rapture. But there are certain rigid tests to which the creations of every artist become liable, even though the touchstone of ready correspondence with social medium be abandoned. Is the thought of the artist independent of language and expression? If not, he may be full of musical voices, but he is a singer and not a

poet. Is he a master builder? is his genius original, creative, architectonic? If not, whatever may be his individual brilliancies, however rich may be his decorative imagery, he remains only an amateur, not an artist. Of the three poets recently named, there is no doubt that Browning, by his profound thoughtfulness, and Tennyson, by his lyrical sweetness, have won their way to an acknowledged eminence. The question, however, may be held to be still open with regard to the third.

There is much in the development of Mr. Swinburne's genius which throws light upon the position which he holds amongst his contemporaries. His earliest work was published in 1861, containing two plays, 'The Queen Mother' and 'Rosamond,' both of which bear obvious traces of juvenile immaturity. Neither of them, however, are without interest, from the evidence they furnish of early poetic influences. In 'Rosamond' there are touches here and there of Browning, whose peculiar characteristics are singularly alien to the more mature stage of Swinburne, but still leave marks of their power in that most discerning criticism on Browning which is to be found in the opening pages of the much later study on Chapman. Bouchard, for instance, in the play often talks the language of Browning, and single lines occur which, transplanted from their context, would never be supposed to belong to Swinburne.

"So his tooth

Bites hard in France and strikes the brown grape hot,  
Makes the wine leap, no skin-room leaves for white."

"Beaten and blown i' the dusty face of the air."

“Being no such sinewed ape,  
Blunder of brawn, and jolted muscle-work.”

Such expressions convey the distinct flavour of Browning's verse. ‘The Queen Mother,’ on the other hand, is formed on a different model. It is by no means a successful drama, some of the incidents—for instance, the scene in which Catherine poisons her clown—being brought into harsh and unnecessary relief. But here and there the style is copied from Shakespeare.

“The sea's yellow and distempered foam.”

“Towers and popular streets  
Should in the middle green smother and drown,  
And havoc die with fulness.”

“She is all white to the dead hair, who was,  
So full of gracious rose the air took colour,  
Turned to a kiss against her face.”—

Lines such as these have more than a distant echo of Elizabethan verse. In this stage the poet, it is clear, is only looking for such models as might satisfy his aspiration, and making those preliminary essays, without which the yet-undeveloped wings cannot learn to soar in their own proper air. Then came the happy inspiration, born of a long training in classical languages, which produced a Greek play worthy to rank with the most successful specimens of this kind of work in our literature. For there is hardly anything like ‘Atalanta in Calydon’ in our modern verse. Its hard, clear outline, like that of some Greek temple in the pure Attic sky; its wonderful richness and variety of music, together with its strong grasp

of the central situation of Hellenic tragedy, the irony of a human being in the toils of a relentless fate; its rhymed choruses, combining the melodiousness of modern verse with the reticent music of the Dorian lyre—all these characteristics make 'Atalanta in Calydon' an unique and almost faultless work of art. The third venture was of a different kind. If we omit for the present 'Chastelard,' to which we shall return later, two years after 'Atalanta,' in 1866, Mr. Swinburne published the notorious 'Poems and Ballads.' The volume produced a keen literary warfare between the poet's champions and detractors. Mr. W. M. Rossetti was the author of a criticism on the book: and finally Mr. Swinburne himself in certain 'Notes' felt obliged to protect his own offspring against the maledictions of outraged propriety.

Even thus early there are supplied for the critic's guidance important data in forming an estimate of Mr. Swinburne. Two points have been placed in clear and conspicuous relief—the linguistic skill and the sensualistic interest. 'Atalanta in Calydon' is only one evidence out of many of Mr. Swinburne's extraordinary proficiency in languages not his own. The instinct which enables a man to transplant himself into conditions of thought and existence which are not those into which he has been born, has its drawbacks as well as its advantages. To Mr. Swinburne nothing seems to have been so easy as to feel, so to speak, in another language. He was, it would appear, a natural scholar, and the Greek tongue, which he could bend so easily to purposes of his own, was the sister of that



modern French poetry whose turns and phrases from Ronsard down to Victor Hugo he has so exhaustively explored. But a training in languages gives rather facility of expression than the penetrative insight of thought. The fatal ease with which the ideas of another age and another country are acquired, however much it may improve style and chasten expression, leaves the student without the power of appreciating or interpreting the insistent problems which vex the soul of his contemporaries. It is the weakness of classicalism that it yields no philosophy of life; and if the student be brought to say his word to his own age, it either wears a curiously old-world air, or else is couched in the language of frivolous cynicism. To such a man there is no such thing as modern thought. He has the trick of the old manner which knows nothing of modern burdens, or else he turns in daily practice to epicurean principles. For there is nothing in the ancient thought which can help the modern inquirer in his struggle to keep alive the soul of man amidst the imposing mechanisms of science, and if it suggests a philosophy, it is often the contemptuous advice to get the full sensational equivalent out of each minute as it flies. In Mr. Swinburne, at all events, the alternative takes a clearly accentuated form: linguistic culture on the one hand, a culture which makes the verses throb with the fire and fervour of the Hellenic spirit; and for practical moral in daily life nothing but the undisguised sensualism of 'Poems and Ballads.'

It is not right perhaps to condemn with such a short

and easy method the Cyrenaic mood of 'Poems and Ballads.' Certainly it is not intended to deny their poetic graces. The sumptuous imagery, the affluence and variety of music, the curious felicities of diction remain unimpaired, however much the spirit may be criticized. But Mr. Swinburne must not be judged as a lesser poet might be, in whose case we might thankfully acknowledge the brilliancy of style and fervour of poetic flow. In his case the severer canons of criticism have to be applied as to one who in mould and stature claims to be in the first rank of poetry. We desire to know whether he is an artist or a stylist, a poet or an amateur. Shall we say that with him the expression is sought for its own sake; or shall we say that he is in the true sense original and creative? The criterion, so far at all events, is easy, for if he be veritably creative he can be so, not in virtue of certain powers of wearing the garment of his poetic forefathers, nor in virtue of a musical utterance which can make our rhetorical mother tongue sing with all the airs and graces of southern languor, but either because he has grappled directly and sincerely with thoughts which are lifted above the common level of our ordinary intellectual moods, or because he has interpreted with more passionate intensity the experience of the men and women of our contemporary age.

It is quite clear that Mr. Swinburne is not, at all events in his earlier work, a philosopher. No such excuse can be given for 'Poems and Ballads' as that we are here presented with a sensationalism which is the natural and

inevitable outcome of a particular theory of the world, as a phantasmagoria of passing effects. History, it is true, gives us a sensationalism so based in the doctrines of Aristippus the Cyrenaic, and modelled on a Heracleitean doctrine of universal flux; and Mr. Pater in a recent book has once again revealed the dependence of his peculiar æsthetic theories on an avowed acceptance of the dogmatic standpoint of the old Ephesian thinker. But if sensationalism be not founded on a philosophic theory, it must be defended as a loyal acknowledgment of concrete facts of experience, as the unimpaired reflection of the simplest data which go to form both our beliefs and our practice. Can, however, Mr. Swinburne's sensationalism be accounted for on such a ground? Is it experience, or morbid fancy, that dictates such poems as those on an extinct type of Roman lust, or a love fragment of Sappho, or on the statue of the Hermaphrodite in the Louvre? If nothing else stood in the way, at least the strained and artificial expression would serve to show that we have here not the creative melody of one who, like Shelley, was nourished on musical thoughts, but rather the recondite ravings of an artificer of impotent emotions.

Will it be said that the connection thus traced between such different studies as 'Atalanta' and 'Poems and Ballads' is forced and arbitrary? It can be so only if we forget the principles of a deeper criticism. Its task should be to exhibit all the different phases of activity as they spring from one common soil, to retrace the various branches of artistic workmanship to the single root of the

artist's own personality. The problem which the early years of Mr. Swinburne put before us is the contrast between classical studies (wherein should be, as we think, all the calm dignity and confident repose of Greek *Sôphrosyne*) and the perfervid glow and hurry of sensual imagination. One suggested solution is the fact that studies in the antique afford a poor discipline in life problems; another might be the real absurdity of the attempt to write Greek plays in a modern tongue. Take the acknowledged successes in this department of literature: Matthew Arnold's 'Merope,' Goethe's 'Iphigeneia at Tauris,' Milton's 'Samson Agonistes,' Mr. Swinburne's 'Atalanta in Calydon.' Keats' 'Hyperion' being only a fine torso hardly comes into the question, and Mr. Bridges' 'Prometheus the Fire Giver' has not yet attained the dignity of a classic. Arnold's 'Merope,' however, full of classical grace and insight, is stricken with the mortal palsy of dulness. Goethe's 'Iphigeneia' is only as good as Euripides' play on the same subject, because it is modern in conception, and deals with essentially modern problems in ethics; dramatically, especially in the *ἀναγνώρισις* between Iphigeneia and Orestes, it is immeasurably inferior. Milton's 'Samson Agonistes' is successful, according to the unanimous verdict of competent critics; but why? Because it is *not* a transcript from the Greek, but while the treatment is Greek, it takes its subject from a cycle of legendary history which stands in the same relation to Milton's readers as the heroic myths stood to a Greek audience. What is the fault of Mr. Swinburne's 'Atalanta'? However perfect in



execution and flawless in workmanship, however musical in its range of poetic voices and rhythms, however full of the old Greek idea of resistless destiny, it has a defect whether viewed from the ancient or the modern side. From the modern standpoint it fails because it is too remote from that sum of common interests and difficulties which it is alike the task and the privilege of modern poets to interpret; and from the ancient standpoint, it fails, because it connects the powerlessness of man before destiny, not with reverential submission and quiet self-restraint, but with a noisy intolerance and an almost frantic atheism. When the poet has not before him a Greek model, on what line of thoughts is his poetical contemplation to run? The charm of the Hellenic world being for him its æsthetic fascination, and not its essential spirit of sobriety, moderation, and self-control, the poet throws the reins on the neck of a fiery imagination; the sage remark of Socrates in 'The Republic' (that the true love must have no taint of vice or madness) will soon be forgotten; æsthesism will lead to acrasia, and art will pander to incontinence. And so the chaste Atalanta has for her unruly sisters Faustina Imperatrix, and "the splendid and sterile Dolores, our Lady of Pain."

The most decisive advance on the conceptions with which Swinburne was occupied in his earlier studies is found in two works bearing the dates of 1871 and 1874. In those years were produced 'Songs before Sunrise' and the tragedy of 'Bothwell,' the first being a glorification of the principles of Pantheism and Republicanism, and the

second a serious dramatic study on lines not too far removed from contemporary interests. If the first of these works exhibits Swinburne as attempting to lay the foundations of a creed, the second is the best answer to that easy criticism which complained of the want of serious purpose and the absence of hard work in the writings of the poet. To estimate these works aright is a matter of considerable importance, for here, if anywhere, is to be found the high-water mark of Swinburne's genius, the most virile and statuesque productions which are associated with his name.

'Songs before Sunrise' is an interesting book from two points of view. In the first place it contains the speculative foundation for the reckless sensualism of 'Poems and Ballads,' and in the second place it adopts a definite political programme in relation to the great revolutionary movements of modern society. Whether, however, in either of these aspects the book is a successful one is another matter. The psychology of Mr. Swinburne is very simple, so simple, indeed, that we are hardly prepared for the superabundant rhetoric with which he adorns so elementary a scheme. Appetite and desire are the only motive impulses of humanity. It is true that the human being is sometimes acted on by reason, by deference to established custom, by conscience. But these, we are told, are blind guides, because not only in themselves the pale and colourless reproductions of what in sensation is positive and definite, but also because they have been connected, as history shows, with all sorts of tyranny, superstition, and wrong. The simple human being, with

primary desires and strong, ineradicable appetites, is the only version of humanity whom Mr. Swinburne would admire. Two elemental principles (whom the poet, as his custom is, envisages as goddesses) are provided for the adoration of true believers. One of these is Earth, "The ghost of God, the mother uncreated," whose connection with natural impulses is too obvious to require illustration. The other, in a highly mystical poem, is called "Hertha," and is apparently an embodiment of Heraclitus' doctrine of the identity of contraries, the old Ephesian philosopher here as elsewhere serving as the name to swear by, to all who espouse a sensationalistic creed. Such a restoration of the human being to his primitive and inalienable birth-rights naturally involves the doctrine of freedom, a freedom which is very like the license claimed by the animals in the Platonic version of Democracy, who refuse to get off the pavements in the streets, as a proof of the universal equality and brotherhood professed by the State. Freedom and liberty are indeed the watchwords of Mr. Swinburne's pyrotechnical triumphs. They blaze in the midst of a coruscation of rhetorical verbiage and metrical effects which it would be difficult to parallel in any other English poetry. Curiously enough, the volume is dedicated to Mazzini, whose constant doctrine was that there could be no rights without duties. In Mr. Swinburne, however, freedom, the right to enjoy, appears to involve no duties, whether of self-denial or of self-perfection. At most there is the duty of self-realization in the narrowest and most limited sense of the word self, which confines its activities

to pleasure and passion. Nor is Swinburne's political propaganda less theatrical and meretricious. Here the sacred name of Shelley is invoked, as though his example consecrated all revolutions and every attempt to upset existing religions. Possibly no serious comparison with Shelley is intended; if it be, the issue is doubly disastrous to the younger poet. The conditions of the revolutionary programme, to begin with, are different. There is no longer any talk about the beheading of kings, or the downfall of dynasties, or the wild upheaval of chaotic disorder. Language of this sort strikes one as thrasonical and insane, for the modern revolutionary creed is confined to certain practical issues, especially the organization of labour against capital, and the confiscation of property. Shelley, too, was, of course, an atheist, but in attacking the prevalent superstitions of the world he is at once more graceful and more plain-spoken than the younger apostle. He would not, for instance, have employed biblical phraseology in an attack on the Bible, nor would he have made use of the Litanies of the Prayer Book in an assault upon all forms of worship. As a mere question of taste, Swinburne's poems entitled 'Before a Crucifix,' 'Blessed among Women,' and 'The Hymn of Man' are as revolting as they are essentially ludicrous. No one, of course, desires to object to Mr. Swinburne's profession of Pantheism so long as it is reasonably argued and coherently deduced from logical principles, but a wild dithyramb in favour of Atheism, couched in terms which are actually borrowed from the books of Christianity, is neither rational, humorous, nor



artistically tolerable. When Mr. Swinburne is content to be simply poetic, as in some of his apostrophes to Italy and to Greece, there let us accord him all the praise that is his due. But his so-called philosophical foundation is too narrow, too rhetorical, too full of feminine hysteria.

Fortunately, Mr. Swinburne has provided us with better materials for estimating his poetic maturity. The drama of 'Bothwell' is the second in a noble trilogy on the character and fortunes of Mary Queen of Scots. If it be right to depreciate the value of Mr. Swinburne's ancient studies, the poet himself has testified to the greatness of the change which came over him when, after 'Atalanta in Calydon,' he composed 'Bothwell.' In two ways his advance is a conspicuous one. Not only do we get the more manly and catholic study involved in a change to drama from a subjective and not entirely healthy exercise of the erotic imagination, but, instead of the pale ghosts of the Hellenic world, we have before us the substantial flesh and blood of those characters who, whether by their vices or their virtues, helped to build up the fabric of our nation. 'Chastelard,' the first of the trilogy, belongs, indeed, to the earlier period. There is no firmness in the characterization, no grasp of the dramatic elements of a situation: and the same insistence on the sensual and passionate aspects of love appears which is to be found in the juvenile drama of 'Rosamond.' In 'Bothwell,' however, a great deal of this is changed. Queen Mary is no longer exhibited as a baneful and criminal Eros luring men to destruction, but as herself brought under the subjection of a stronger

will and a more brutal resolve. Moreover, there are so many traces in the drama of careful and conscientious use of authorities that we are almost dazed by the series of historic scenes and the introduction of countless historic personages. If the critic said in his haste that Mr. Swinburne was deficient in seriousness and study, with the drama of 'Bothwell' before him he must recant his error. Nor can it be said that there is any want of clear and definite characterization, at all events in the principal parts. The successive changes in Mary's character, from the time of the murder of Rizzio, through the domination of Bothwell and the complicity in the destruction of Darnley at Kirk-o'-field, down to the final surrender of herself to Elizabeth in view of a possible future revenge, are traced with a conscientious fidelity to nature which is the best gift of the dramatist. The character of Bothwell himself is clear in outline and consistent in details. His warlike prowess, his brutal frankness, his innate strength of resolve, his power of at once subduing the Queen of Scots and yet binding her to himself with stronger chains than she had ever worn in all her previous amours, throw the whole savage personality out in conspicuous relief from the multitude of subordinate characters. Moreover, there is good dramatic use of materials, witness the fine scene when Mary and Darnley have their last interview at Kirk-o'-field. Here most of the incidents are historical, especially the terrible words of Mary: "'Twas just this time last year David was slain;" and Darnley's application to his own case of the words of the Psalmist, "the deadly

Scripture," wherein he complains that it was not an open enemy that had done him this dishonour, but his own familiar friend with whom he had so often taken sweet counsel.

On the other hand, the drama suffers from all the inherent defects of so-called 'literary' dramatic writing. It is much too long and diffuse, and too complicated in historic characters and historic detail. The list of 'Dramatis Personæ' is enough to appal the stoutest heart; for sixty-three personages struggle and writhe on Mr. Swinburne's stage. Five hundred and thirty-two pages of close print are required to evolve the tragic incidents of the play; and after all, the fifth act is not properly the close of a completed dramatic evolution, but the prelude for the 'Mary Stuart' which ensues. The fourth act is undoubtedly the best, for the reason especially that it includes the famous sermon of John Knox; but the third and second acts are very tedious, being devoid of that power of artistic selectiveness which enables a dramatist to concentrate his action on two or three salient points. The fifth act falls absolutely flat after the grandeur of the fourth, the only excuse being the necessary preparation of ground for the ensuing play. In these and other points, it may be regretted that Mr. Swinburne should not have attempted to write professedly for the stage, in which case he might have learnt that pregnant conciseness, both in incident and characterization, without which no practical dramatist can win the ear of a busy and somewhat impatient audience.


'Mary Stuart,' the concluding part of the trilogy, is by no means so fine or so powerfully written as its predecessor, though it undoubtedly adds somewhat to the great dramatic and poetic achievement of its author, the discovery, namely, of the true character of the Queen of Scots. For here was a personality which, in its subtlety and weakness, essentially suited the forcible yet narrow capacities of Mr. Swinburne's poetic genius. Mary Stuart he may claim to have thoroughly understood, because the hysterical, passionate, subjective nature of that strange woman struck certain answering chords in her biographer's temperament.

"She shall be a world's wonder to all time,  
A deadly glory watched of marvelling men,  
Not without praise, not without noble tears,  
And if without what she would never have,  
Who had it never, pity,—yet from none  
Quite without reverence and some kind of love  
For that which was so royal."

But it is to Mr. Swinburne's credit that he has almost made live before our eyes two other personalities with whom he has little or nothing in common—the brutal Bothwell and the puritanical Knox, both intense, arrogant, and impetuous forces, devoid possibly of spiritual interest, yet instinct with natural and imperious fire. And the character of Mary Beaton, though its importance is probably unhistorical, is full of interest, and has a noticeable influence on the development of the tragedy in serving as a link to connect the three dramas together. In such characterizations the dramatist must have his due.



A happy specimen of Mr. Swinburne's later manner is furnished by the Greek tragedy called 'Erechtheus,' in many respects one of the most completely enjoyable poems which the author has produced. Full of musical sound, and furnished with many magnificent lines, 'Erechtheus' is perhaps superior to 'Atalanta' in that it has more breadth and stateliness of action, and exhibits a more perfectly Hellenic repose. It has less sweetness but more majesty, and frantic declamation against the gods is conspicuously absent. What it loses in graceful juvenility it gains in maturity of grasp and virile self-control. The legend which Mr. Swinburne follows groups together the two events of Chthonia's sacrifice and Eumolpus' defeat as contemporaneous incidents, instead of exhibiting the immolation of the daughter as the recompense required by Poseidon for the death of his son. He is thus enabled to bring into prominence the character of Erechtheus's wife, Praxithea, who has on one and the same day to bear the loss of daughter and of husband, and yet, through her noble devotion to the cause of Athens, for whom no sacrifices are too costly, is still able to say with peaceful resignation, "I praise the gods for Athens." In other respects, Mr. Swinburne's arrangement leads to some awkwardness of construction. For two messengers have successively to present themselves, the first with tidings of how Chthonia met her death, "with light in all her face as of a bride;" and the second with the story of the great battle, in which Erechtheus drives his spear "through the red heart's root" of Eumolpus, and himself



falls smitten by a "sheer shaft of lightning writhen." The intimate connection between the two events is left for the reader to surmise, where a clear statement of cause and effect might have led to a better dramatic development. But the chorus which divides the speeches of the two messengers is in Mr. Swinburne's finest style. The verse heaves and pants with the furious riot of the battle-scene which the Chorus are imagining, and eye and ear alike are dazed with the wonderful affluence of the diction:—

"From the roots of the hills to the plain's dim verge, and  
the dark, loud shore,  
Air shudders with shrill spears crossing, and hurtling of  
wheels that roar.  
As the grinding of teeth in the jaws of a lion that foam as  
they gnash,  
Is the shriek of the axles that loosen, the shock of the poles  
that crash.  
The dense manes darken and glitter, the mouths of the  
mad steeds champ,  
Their heads flash blind through the battle, and death's foot  
rings in their tramp."

So the picture goes on for three pages, rich in wild hyperbole of effective imagery, as is Mr. Swinburne's wont. There appears to be something very congenial to the author's temperament in such a worship of "Mother Earth" as the autochthonous inhabitants of Attica professed. In reality Chthon is the divinity, who protects her children against the sea's offspring, Eumolpus, rather than the Athena, who appears, as Greek tragic custom demands, at the end of the play, when the "dignus vindice nodus" has been reached. To celestial gods the poet is

disinclined to do homage; to the bountiful mother of all being, the material element from which things receive their frame, which contains in itself, as Professor Tyndall once declared, "the promise and potency of all terrestrial life"—to such a dark negation of all spiritual force, Mr. Swinburne here, as elsewhere, pays his tribute of enthusiastic devotion. This is the link which connects the poet with an age of materialistic science. There remains, however, even in 'Erechtheus,' that sense of unreality and fruitless ingenuity to which all such adaptations from the classics must, in the nature of things, be exposed. Here, for instance, are some lines put in the mouth of the blameless Chthonia, when she first appears on the scene:—

"Forth of the fine-spun folds of veils that hide  
My virgin chamber toward the full-faced sun,  
I set my foot not moved of mine own will,  
Unmaidenlike, nor with unprompted speed  
Turn eyes too broad or dog-like unabashed——"

Faultlessly Greek, but absolutely fatuous. Did not Mr. Lowell once write an ingenious caricature of such Hellenism in a *στυχομυθία*, commencing, "Foolish who bites off nose, his face to spite"?

Mr. Swinburne's later contributions have not added much to the promise or the realization of his poetic powers, albeit that his admirers are fond of bringing them in evidence that he has outlived the errors of his youth. Doubtless they are more restrained in expression; they do not exhibit so much exuberance of emotional riot,

while at the same time they prove that the musical gift has not waned with the passing years. "Boy poet" Mr. Swinburne can no longer claim to be, and our judgment must perforce be harder on anything which reminds us of juvenile rhodomontade and bombast. Yet if we ask what new ideas the years which bring the philosophic mind have contributed, what thoughts of clearer or deeper insight have enriched our common heritage, the answer reveals the infertility of the soil from which we expect a second harvest. Two subjects inspire all the later work of Mr. Swinburne—the sea and babies. The worship of the baby, as practised by its latest devotee, is not perhaps an inspiring spectacle. But the praise of the sea is even more significant, for it is nothing if not sensuous; it is the conscious ecstasy of the wash of waves over the naked body of the swimmer, the delirium of solitary exposure to the blind fury of elemental strength. When a strong man, like Byron or Shakespeare, praises the sea, he describes it as its master. The poems of Mr. Swinburne on the same subject reveal the attitude of the slave, or rather the passionate, submissive joys of some creature of a tyrant's whims. Is there any later thought to be culled from his verse? If so, possibly it may be found in the wonderful verses which exhibit his antagonism to the House of Lords in the 'Midsummer Holiday.' But a caricaturist of Mr. Swinburne's versification could not possibly outdo in extravagance of diction these most characteristic odes. No parody or burlesque could do its subject such perfect justice.



Mr. Swinburne's prose criticisms in his 'Essays and Studies' afford convenient material for a summary of the chief points in his literary character. That his prose style is a good one few would be prepared to admit; it has too much artificial and meretricious brilliancy. Nor is his critical instinct wholly trustworthy or admirable, for it is too petulant, and suggests too few ideas. There is a sentence in one of the essays which serves exactly to represent the ordinary reader's feelings in this matter. "We do not always want," says Mr. Swinburne, in unconscious self-criticism, "to bathe our spirit in overflowing waters or flaming fires of imagination: pathos, and passion, and aspiration, and desire are not the only springs we seek for song." Yet if we take the essays in hand, just as when we read the poems, we are always being bathed in overflowing waters and flaming fires. There is no repose of spirit, no beauty of calm, we never find ourselves saying it is good for us to be here. Sympathy is a precious quality for the critic, and the faculty for praise sometimes argues a richly-endowed nature. Yet the constant use of superlatives in discussing poetic work does not help our judgment or impress our minds. Reading each essay by itself, we might suppose that Mr. Swinburne is in turn introducing us to the greatest poet of the age. Rossetti, Morris, Matthew Arnold, Coleridge, Shelley—each is the most magnificent artist that ever lived to confound the Philistine. It is true that Matthew Arnold, who has more sanity and less poetry than Mr. Swinburne, only affects him on his classical side, and not on that by which

he has most influence on his generation; but that is explicable by antecedent considerations. Only Wordsworth, as the chosen poet of Philistinism, is left out in the cold. Even Byron gets bespattered with some frothy praise, though subsequently Mr. Swinburne has seen fit to qualify his judgments. But the most servile adulation is of course reserved for Victor Hugo, "the master," as he is usually styled, in whose presence Mr. Swinburne always takes the shoes from off his feet, and crawls in prostrate reverential awe. Within the limits of his Pantheon there is no such ecstatic worshipper as this most intolerant of atheists, for his nature is essentially yielding and receptive, with stormy gusts of passion and indiscriminating impulses of emotion. There is no strong masculine formative quality about him, which explains why he uses so many adjectives and suggests so few thoughts. Is there anything in the philosophy of 'Songs before Sunrise' to compare with the long soliloquy of Empedocles in Matthew Arnold's poem? Is there any thoughtfulness of characterization in his dramas which can be put by the side of Browning's 'Djabal,' or 'Anael,' or 'Strafford'? Moreover, there is an entire absence of humour—a serious defect in any poet claiming to be intellectual. For clumsiness of irony it would be difficult to beat the pages (pp. 29, 30) in 'Essays and Studies,' in which he comments on the action of the Belgian Government towards Hugo. The power of satire depends largely on terseness, as wit depends on brevity, and Swinburne's periods are far too prolix to be effective. There remain the indubitably

picturesque qualities of his style, the wealth and fluency of rhetoric, and the unique command of music. Sometimes the result is marred by alliterative tricks; at other times it is heightened by the graceful touches of classical culture. Here, for instance, on two successive pages of one of Mr. Swinburne's essays, are passages which illustrate this contrast. He is describing one of Hugo's heroines:—

“But now we have her from the hands of a poet as well as student, new blown and actual as a gathered flower, in warm bloom of blood and breath, clothed with live colour, fair with significant flesh, passionately palpable.”

The force of tawdry alliteration could no farther go; but on the next page is a fine passage, instinct with the life and spirit of Greek tragic verse:—

“We seem to hear about her the beat and clash of the terrible timbrels, the music that Æschylus set to verse, the music that made mad, the upper notes of the psalm shrill and strong as a sea-wind, the ‘bull-voiced’ bellowing under-song of those dread choristers from somewhere out of sight, the tempest of tambourines giving back thunder to the thunder, the fury of Divine lust that thickened with human blood the hill-streams of Cithæron.”

Perhaps some of Swinburne's best studies are on Elizabethan dramatists, John Ford, for instance, in ‘Essays and Studies,’ or the criticism on George Chapman. It is in the latter that some of the most discriminating remarks occur which have perhaps ever been made on Browning. The obscurity which arises from wealth of ideas is most carefully distinguished from that which is due to confusion of thought, a distinction which ought to be always

present to the student of our modern poet of enigmas. But the total impression left on us by Swinburne's prose is the same as that of his verse. Brilliantly gifted, profusely voluble, passionately rhetorical, it puts before us too often phrases instead of thoughts, verbal contortions instead of conceptions. It errs in point of taste, not rarely nor unwittingly. Professional poet of regicides, official mouthpiece of democratic atheism, self-chosen champion of a creed of glorified sensationalism, Mr. Swinburne is, however artistic, yet not an artist, and however cultured, yet still an amateur: for he is not creative, not original in the best and largest sense of the word, because not instinct with illuminating ideas. There clings to him too much of the feminine quality. Like the Mary of his own trilogy, he has fallen under many fascinations, he has been the victim of constant amours. Landor was his Chastelard, Hugo is certainly his Bothwell. Will the sombre tragedy end by leaving him in the hands of some hard-headed Philistine Elizabeth? \*

\* Mr. Swinburne's new volume *Lochrine* deserves a separate study.



## CHARLES READE'S NOVELS.

IN the most unpicturesque portion of the most picturesque college in Oxford are the rooms which used to be occupied by Charles Reade. The name 'Dr. Reade' is still painted over the door, and, though there is alteration in the sitting-room, the long looking-glasses, for which, both here and at Albert Gate, the eccentric fellow of Magdalen College had an especial fondness, still adorn the walls.\* In Magdalen College, however, the memorials of Charles Reade are very few. He was nominated for a demyship—it was the time when election depended on nomination—owing to the illness of some favoured protégé, whose patron thereupon discovered originality and excellence in young Reade's essay. He was elected Vinerian Scholar in 1835, and obtained a third-class in *Literis Humanioribus* in the same year. In 1844 and 1849 he was Bursar of his college, while in 1851 he became Vice-President, and wrote the Latin record of his year of office in the neatest of hand-writing and with the most Tacitean terseness. In after years, when his home was in Bolton Row or at Albert Gate, his visits to Oxford were made

\* There has been some change since the above was first written.

generally in the Long Vacation, and the company he entertained was that of Bohemian artists rather than Oxford fellows. There is, indeed, very little trace of Oxford in Charles Reade; he exercised no influence on the university, while the effect of an academic training on him appears more in the characteristics of some of his heroes than in the moulding of his own style and workmanship. Robert Penfold, in 'Foul Play,' being an Oxford man, had, we are told, learnt to be versatile and thorough, and there was an indefinable air of Eton and Oxford in Alfred Hardie, which often helped him in the vicissitudes of 'Hard Cash.' But the author of these creations was himself dramatist, journalist, novelist, Bohemian—anything but an Oxford man of the approved academic type.

Like many other artists and men of genius, Charles Reade for some time mistook the real bent of his powers. His earliest efforts were dramatic rather than literary, and, indeed, throughout all his life, just as George Eliot wished to be considered a poet, so did his ambition incline to be considered as writer of plays rather than of novels. It was with a play that he first assailed the close theatrical profession at the Haymarket: it was on the production of plays that he wasted the money he made in writing novels; it was at a play-house (Drury Lane, when 'Freedom' was brought out in August, 1883) that he made his last appearance in public before his fatal journey to Cannes. Yet of all his productions in this department only two, 'It is Never too Late to Mend,' and 'Drink,' obtained a real success. The other well-known plays,

'The Scuttled Ship,' 'Masks and Faces,' and 'Two Loves and a Life,' were produced in collaboration with Tom Taylor and Dion Boucicault. The mistake here is common and easily explicable. Charles Reade had many of the instincts of the dramatist; in his presentation of character, in his love of 'situation,' in his choice of contrasted scenes, in the very rapidity and picturesqueness of his style he showed true dramatic aptitude. But the successful playwright, at all events in our contemporary age, excels more in scenic construction than in literary workmanship, and has a keen appreciation of the public taste for stage-carpentry rather than the development of character.

As a novelist, Charles Reade is not unworthy to be ranked with literary giants such as Thackeray, and Dickens, and George Eliot. He cannot justly be compared with any of them, for his gifts were dissimilar. He was not an artist like Thackeray; he had not the undeniable genius and prodigality of power which is found in Dickens; nor had he the gift of keen analysis or the profound thoughtfulness of George Eliot. Here and there he has the note of Dickens, witness the magnificent funeral scene of Edward Josephs in 'Never too Late to Mend' (chap. xxvii.); but he has more points of comparison with writers for whom he had a great admiration, though they were in many respects his inferiors, such as Wilkie Collins, Bulwer Lytton, and Miss Braddon. With them he shares his love of intricate plots, his diligent study of police intelligence, his portraiture of the conventional

villain, his power of exciting interest in his tales; but he has also gifts which they either do not possess, or possess in inferior forms. Nothing is more remarkable than the laboriousness with which he accumulates his materials. His knowledge is accurate and extensive in such different subjects, for instance, as prison-life, lunatic asylums, criminal procedure, trades unions, theory of banking, the life and learning of the middle ages, contemporary science. As a writer, he possesses *le goût de la réalité*, the instinct of life; while the animation of his style, the plentiful invention of incidents, the enormous interest in contemporary events, the implicit belief in the virtues of the Anglo-Saxon character, are points which serve to distinguish him among the novelists of his age. His respect for newspapers, as compared with books, his distrust of the ordinary regimen of doctors, his distaste for poets, with the exception of Sir Walter Scott, his love of Cremona fiddles, his fondness for Americans, and his dislike of Carlyle, are *nuances* which affect only his personal character.

Mr. Reade has left a picture of himself in the character of Rolfe in 'A Terrible Temptation.' His studio at Albert Gate is first described:—

"The room was large in itself, and multiplied tenfold by great mirrors from floor to ceiling, with no frames but a narrow oak beading. Opposite, on entering, was a bay window, all plate-glass, the central panes of which opened, like doors, upon a pretty little garden that glowed with colour, and was backed by fine trees belonging to the nation; for this garden ran up to the wall of Hyde Park. . . . Not a sound of London could be heard.



“So far the room was romantic; but there was a prosaic corner to shock those who fancy that fiction is the spontaneous overflow of a poetic fountain fed by nature only. Between the fireplace and the window, and within a foot or two of the wall, stood a gigantic writing-table, with the signs of hard labour on it, and of severe system; three plated buckets, each containing three pints full of letters to be answered, other letters to be pasted into a classified guard-book, loose notes to be pasted into various books and classified, five things like bankers’ bill-books, into whose several compartments MS. notes and newspaper cuttings were thrown, as a preliminary towards classification in books. Underneath the table was a formidable array of note-books, standing upright and labelled on their backs. There were about twenty large folios of classified facts, ideas, and pictures. Then there was a collection of solid quartos, and of smaller folio guard-books called indexes. There was ‘Index rerum et journalium,’ ‘Index rerum et librorum,’ ‘Index rerum et hominum,’ and a lot more; indeed so many, that by way of climax, there was a fat folio ledger entitled, ‘Index ad Indices.’

“By the side of the table were six or seven thick paste-board cards, each about the size of a large portfolio, and on these the author’s notes and extracts were collected from all his repertories into something like a focus for a present purpose. He was writing a novel based on fact; facts, incidents, living dialogue, pictures, reflections, situations, were all on these cards to choose from, and arranged in headed columns; and some portions of the work he was writing on this basis of imagination and drudgery lay on the table in two forms—his own writing and his secretary’s copy thereof, the latter corrected for the press. This copy was half margin, and so provided for additions and improvements; but for one addition there were ten excisions, great and small.”

The author himself is then sketched:—

“The author, who had dashed into the garden for a moment’s recreation, came to the window. He looked neither like a poet nor a drudge, but a great fat country farmer.” (This was a generous libel.) “He was rather tall, smallish head, commonplace features, mild brown eye, not very bright, short beard, and wore a suit of tweed all one colour. Such looked the writer of romances founded on fact. He rolled up to the window, for, if he looked like a farmer, he walked like a sailor,

and surveyed the two women with a mild, inoffensive, ox-like gaze."

It is necessary to lay stress on this description of the writer, and of his mode of working, for it leads at once to the capital characteristic of Reade. Every artist, if he is worthy of the name, raises a problem in art. In Reade's case, the problem affects the proper balance which should be maintained between 'materials' and 'imagination.' It is claimed as the especial glory of the French 'école naturaliste,' that the writer amasses an enormous amount of data to one chapter of literary work. And in the same breath, a slur is cast upon the English school of novelists because they trust too much to the imagination in a commonplace routine of subjects, and have no taste or industry for the collection of materials, gained by downright hard study and unwearied personal experience. Now here was a man who rejoiced above all in the classification of data, preparatory to his novel-writing. All his principal novels are witnesses to his laboriousness. It is enough to mention the names of 'Hard Cash,' 'It is Never too Late to Mend,' 'Put Yourself in his Place,' and 'The Cloister and the Hearth.' Reade himself delivers no uncertain sound in one of his letters addressed to the 'Daily Globe,' Toronto. Mr. Goldwin Smith, in true professorial style, had criticized Reade's work. This is how Reade answers him :—

"He now carries the same system, the criticaster's, into a matter of more general importance. He says that I found my fictions on fact, and so tell lies : and that the chiefs of fiction did not found fiction on fact, and so only told truths. Now

where does he discover that the chiefs of fiction did not found their figments upon facts? It could be proved in a court of law that Shakespeare founded his fiction on fact, wherever he could get hold of fact. Fact is that writer's idol. As for Scott, he is one mass of facts. Daniel Defoe came to his work armed with facts from three main sources and wrote a volume beyond praise. His rich storehouse of rare facts exhausted, he still went on, peopled his island and produced a mediocre volume, such as anybody could write in this age of ours. He tried my anonymuncule's theory: he took the field armed with his imagination only, unadulterated by facts. What was the result? He produced the second part of 'Robinson Crusoe,' which the public read for its title, and promptly damned upon its merits; it has literally disappeared from literature."

The true question is here somewhat obscured, owing to the characteristic impetuosity of Reade's style. There is no real antithesis between writing on a basis of facts and writing by the pure light of the imagination, for no writer, however imaginative, can construct his work in the airy void. But it is a question whether, as in the case of Reade himself, the mass of detail, every part of which can be verified as so much real fact, does not, in some of his books, overpower and overwhelm the imaginative framework. Compare and contrast 'Christie Johnstone,' written in 1850 or 1851, with 'The Wandering Heir,' which was produced in the Christmas number of the 'Graphic' in 1872. The first work is written before the enormous appetite for facts and 'materials' had overtaken Reade, and while yet his imagination could play round the scenes of his early manhood. In the second work there is chapter and verse for every statement and every incident in the text, as the author is at pains to show in his elaborate defence of himself



against the charge of plagiarism from Swift. Is not the first the more successful story from the artistic point of view? And is not "the invention of equal power with the facts," exactly that which is wanting in the second? Doubtless the circulation of 'The Wandering Heir' was extensive; but if Charles Reade had not written 'Christie Johnstone,' and that charming dramatic study, 'Peg Woffington,' he could not have won the suffrages of the public, which afterwards made his 'Wandering Heir' so salable a commodity.

A better instance is furnished by the well-known 'It is Never too Late to Mend,' as compared with 'Griffith Gaunt.' There can be little doubt that 'Griffith Gaunt' is Reade's masterpiece. So, at least, the author thought. "The whole credit and discredit of 'Griffith Gaunt,' my masterpiece, belongs to me, its sole author and original vendor," he says, in a letter published in 'Readiana.' Messrs. Chatto and Windus, who produced the popular edition of Reade's works, could probably testify that there is no novel which commands so good a sale in America and the colonies, as well as in England. Now the chief merit of 'Griffith Gaunt' lies in the masterly delineation of character in the three chief personages, Catherine Gaunt, Mercy Vint, and the hero himself. Catherine is the embodiment of haughty pride, passionate haste, and religious devotion. Mercy is the incarnation of sweetness, humility, and tenderness. Griffith Gaunt is the brave, lusty English gentleman, mad in anger, mad in jealousy, sensitive, capricious, generous in turns, at the



bidding of his rapid and changing moods. No better Othello in English dress has ever been drawn by a truly Shakesperian artist, in dashes of lurid colour with a pen of eloquent fire. 'It is Never too Late to Mend' is constructed on a very different plan. No book could well be more interesting, but what one remembers is not the characters, but the incidents; not the story as a whole, but the *purpurei panni*—the graphic scenes and picturesque descriptions. What the author says of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' is eminently true of his own work: "It is written in many places with art; in all with red ink and the biceps muscle." But the book itself falls into two distinct divisions in accordance with the two different sets of materials, which the author has classified and tabulated for his purpose. The first half is full of the iniquities of the prison system; the second is equally full of Australia. What are the characters compared with the accurate details? What does one care for George Fielding, or Robinson, or Susan, compared with the patches of bright colour here and there—Fielding's farewell to his farm, Robinson's curse, the gold diggers listening to the skylark, Joseph's funeral? Mr. Eden himself serves only as the most elaborate specimen of a character we are always finding in Reade, the hero of unfailing ingenuity and resource. He is a type and not a man, just as the other personages are mere pegs on which are hung the author's delineations of gold-finding in Australia, or his denunciations of the iniquity of prison confinement in separate cells. Character and construction form the merit of 'Griffith

Gaunt'; facts, materials, data, are the chief ingredients of the other story. In other words, 'Griffith Gaunt,' which is not overpowered with materials, is a work of art, while 'Never too Late to Mend' moves heavily under the weight of those facts which its author made it his boast to collect. It is a highly descriptive, intensely interesting, but somewhat amorphous collection of *pièces de conviction*. The same criticism applies to 'Put Yourself in his Place.' Here the didactic tendency is still more obvious, for Reade's object is to expose the heartless cruelty of Trades' Unions. The characters suffer in consequence, with the possible exception of Dr. Amboyne. But the crucial test is afforded by 'The Cloister and the Hearth.' If a man can read it through in a sitting, as he can 'Griffith Gaunt,' if he is carried through it with the same rapt attention, the same suspension of the critical faculty which he experiences when dealing with a work of real artistic construction, then to such a man, at all events, the invention in the book is of equal power with the facts. But if he takes it in such draughts as he is able to stand, being incapable of assimilating it in its entirety, if he feels now and again as if he were laboriously getting up a learned work on the Middle Ages, as is the case, it may be suspected, with most readers, then the natural conclusion is that the 'Cloister and the Hearth,' though a work of great learning and industry, and containing in the fortunes of Gerard and Margaret a love-story of almost idyllic sweetness, is yet not wholly a work of art. "Here," one may say (Mr. Walter Besant has

actually said it), "is Erasmus, here is Froissart, here is Deschamps, here is Coquillart, here is Gringoire, here is Villon, here is Luther;" and just for that reason is it imperfect. The scholar's learning is staring out of the holes in the artistic armour; it smells too much of the academic oil.

One of the effects of this partial failure in artistic construction is seen in the monotony of some of Charles Reade's types. The main character in his fiction is always the Resourceful Hero. We can pursue the character through most of Reade's work. He is not, as the author on more than one occasion takes pains to tell us, a Carlylese hero; he has some regard for human life, and he is usually an affectionate, warm-hearted Christian. But wherever he is, and whatever problem besets him, he is sure to come through it triumphantly. To this class belongs Robert Penfold, in 'Foul Play,' on his desert island, with the problem before him how to diffuse intelligence from a fixed point over thousands of miles. Henry Little, in 'Put Yourself in his Place,' is of the same fraternity, full of inventive skill in order to wage successful war single-handed against the Trades' Unions. So, too, is Alfred Hardie a hero of resource in 'Hard Cash,' a young man of culture and intelligence, with "an indefinable air of Eton and Oxford about him," condemned to struggle against the iniquities of a private lunatic asylum and an unnatural father. Robinson, the converted convict in 'Never too Late to Mend,' shows similar skill and inventiveness in conquering difficulties, whether the difficulties

are the material hardships of Australian gold-digging, or the more impalpable temptations of his own past life. To these may perhaps be added Gerard and Denys, in 'The Cloister and the Hearth,' and Mr. Rolfe in the 'Terrible Temptation.'

Side by side with the resourceful hero is generally found the aiding and abetting Doctor. Ordinary doctors are not, as a rule, very civilly treated by Charles Reade. He calls them "the most venal class upon the earth" in the pages of 'Hard Cash,' and Doctors Wycherley and Osmond, Mosely and Donkyn are held up to public reprobation as grasping, incompetent, and gullible. But to serve as contrast to the commonplace doctor, appears the rare and exceptional doctor, who is a judge of character as well as of drugs, and who has a decided objection to blood-letting. Thus Doctor Suaby is the best friend of Sir Charles Bassett in a 'Terrible Temptation'; Dr. Amboyne is always at the right hand of Henry Little in 'Put Yourself in his Place,' and Dr. Aberford in 'Christie Johnstone' is the only man who sees through the jaded epicurean, Lord Ipsden. But the best representative of the class is Dr. Sampson in 'Hard Cash,' who is so staunch an ally to Alfred Hardie. The scenes in which Dr. Sampson figures are some of the best which Reade ever wrote, just as the crotchety, warm-hearted, rough-tongued old quack, with his everlasting "Chronothairmal therey," is one of the few genuinely humorous characters in Reade's gallery of portraits. Mr. John Coleman has told us that Dr. Sampson was Dr. Dickson, and that the novelist had, in his usual



precise way, classified and tabulated the characteristics of his friend under the head of Dickybirdiana. Tabulation is here, as elsewhere, Reade's invincible hobby. When he was at Oxford, he sometimes used to busy himself with the intricacies of Oxford aquatics, going so far as to classify the various expressions used by boating men, and even the terms of endearment with which they used to welcome their athletic friends. The result was the scene at Henley Regatta in which Edward Dodd and Alfred Hardie appear. Naturally enough, this mechanical way of getting up a subject sometimes played the author false. It is incongruous enough to boating men to find Mr. Edward Dodd, who ought to have been in hard training, smoking a cigar on Henley Bridge, just as the same authorities would hardly endorse the description given by Reade of the Oxford stroke ("the true Oxford stroke is slow in the water but swift in the air"), which he communicated to the 'Observer' in 1872. Nor is it quite comprehensible why Mr. Angelo, the athletic curate in 'A Terrible Temptation,' should be represented as having won "the 200 yards race" at Oxford.

The villain is an equally typical personage in these novels. He always employs the same arts. He intercepts letters at the post office, he tampers with corruptible officials, and hires unconscientious villains. This is the procedure of Meadows in 'Never too Late to Mend'; of Coventry in 'Put Yourself in his Place'; of Woodlaw in 'Foul Play'; of Richard Bassett in 'A Terrible Temptation'; of Richard Hardie in 'Hard Cash.' Pomander in

'Peg Woffington,' Richard Annesley in 'The Wandering Heir,' and Ghysbrecht van Swieten in 'The Cloister and the Hearth,' belong to the same conventional category. In these matters, some of Charles Reade's affinity to transpontine melodrama appears. There must be a villain on the stage to counterbalance the innocent charms of the heroine, and to bring out in clearer relief the many virtues of the hero. He must wind in and out of the various scenes for four acts in order to be brought up for condign punishment in the fifth, and receive the indignant hisses of the gallery when he is called before the curtain. Moreover, Charles Reade's villain has, usually, a feebler villain behind him to serve as catspaw. Thus Meadows employs the base arts of Crawley, and Hardie and Skinner are first villain and second villain respectively in 'Hard Cash.' The catspaw of Woodlaw is Wylie, the creature of Richard Bassett is the unscrupulous attorney, Wheeler.

The parson is another favourite character. The highest representative of this class is Francis Eden in 'Never too Late to Mend.' He is the ideally good man, who unites in a marvellous compound the subtlety of the resourceful hero and the sweet reasonableness of the saint. He is never at fault in the judgment of character, never devoid of plans in the hour of danger; buffeted by adverse fate, he always proves ultimately superior to circumstances, and leaves behind him a rich heritage of noble acts, and grateful and devoted friends. So too is Robert Penfold, at once a martyr and a saint, only inferior to Francis Eden in that he is a victim to the delicious weaknesses of love-making.

Sometimes the contrast is indicated between the true priest and the hollow semblance clad in priestly guise. Thus Eden, the saint, is contrasted with Mr. Jones, the essence of commonplace. Brother Francis, the genuine, the practical, the true-hearted, is contrasted with Brother Leonard, the emotional, the weak-kneed; while the counterpart to the good-looking Angelo, who is so much in love with Lady Bassett, is furnished by Rolfe, who for the nonce discharges ecclesiastical functions.

Charles Reade's female characters require a more careful scrutiny. It is quite clear, from numerous references in his novels, that he thought he was giving a better representation of female character than his contemporaries, and we know from other sources that he employed his usual system of tabulation with such zeal in this case that he even classified and arranged the ejaculations which women use. One of his admirers has gone so far as to say that he invented the 'true woman'; at all events, he arranged two parallel columns of facts, labelled respectively, 'Femina Ficta,' and 'Femina Vera.' Nor is it untrue to add that among Charles Reade's gallery of portraits, some of the best and most life-like are his women. His female characters run mainly into three types. There is the strong natural girl, like Christie Johnstone, or Jael Dence, or Philippa Chester, or Mary Wells. There is the class of domestic innocents—sweet, simple, lovable girls, without much strength, except when love transports them out of themselves—like Julia Dodd, Grace Carden, Susan Merton, Margaret Brandt, Mercy Vint, Mabel Vane, and Lady

Bassett. The third type is the passionate woman, the courtesan actual or potential, sometimes dangerous, cruel, and revengeful to the bitter end, like Mrs. Ryder and Mrs. Archbold, sometimes reformed and helpful, like Rhoda Somerset. Of these classes, the third is most conventional and stagey. According to Reade's own statement, he copied Rhoda Somerset from the pages of the 'Times.' "It was you," he says to the editor ('Readiana,' p. 322), "who first introduced her, ponies and all, to the public in an admirable letter, headed 'Anonyma.'" But in the novel she plays no distinguished part, and is converted to a moral life with a rapidity and a nonchalance which reminds one of the 'Formosa' in Dion Boucicault's laughable play. Mrs. Archbold and Mrs. Ryder are both from the same mould, easily enamoured, madly passionate, bitterly revengeful, fulfilling the same rôle as the wicked washerwoman who works such woe to Gervaise and the mason in Reade's dramatic version of 'L'Assommoir.' Far better and more life-like are those heroines whom Reade loves to trace, the natural, strong-minded, warm-hearted characters, fresh with the bloom of wild roses, and with the scent of new-mown hay. These are often put into contrast with the artificial ladies of polished life, very much to the disadvantage of the latter. Thus Jael Dence is placed side by side with Grace Carden, Christie Johnstone with Lady Barbara Sinclair, Mercy Vint with Catherine Gaunt, Mary Wells with Lady Bassett. So, too, the process of conversion from artificiality to naturalness is exhibited in a single character,



when Helen Rollaston, in 'Foul Play,' is changed into a true-hearted girl by the beneficial discipline of an island life, and Peg Woffington leaves the mimic passions of the stage owing to the influence of Mabel Vane. The simple innocents like Susan Merton and Grace Carden and Julia Dodd are less attractive, perhaps because the purity of their hearts renders characterization almost impossible. But if one has to select two heroines from Charles Reade's gallery, let the verdict be given for Christie Johnstone and Margaret Brandt. While the latter represents the class of *ingénues* at the very best, the former is the truest girl whom Reade has drawn. If all else be forgotten, the strong and tender fisher-girl of Newhaven, with her Dutch cap, and cotton jacket, and kilted petticoat, white as milk and supple as a young ash tree, lingers in the memory like a breath from her own native sea.

It is necessary to remember how many different subjects Charles Reade has illustrated in order to appreciate the versatility of his genius and the extent of his studies. To understand his method the reader can consult the preface to 'Hard Cash,' or to 'A Simpleton,' or go through the formidable list of authorities quoted in the Appendix to 'The Wandering Heir.' He studied Blue-books and journals with the unremitting laboriousness and attention which a student gives to some recondite subject of research. Newspapers, above all, suggested topics to his pen. "For eighteen years," he says to the editor of the 'Times,' "the journal you conduct so ably has been my preceptor and the main source of my works; at all events of the most

approved. A noble passage in the 'Times' of September 7 or 8, 1853, touched my heart, inflamed my imagination, and was the germ of my first important work, 'It is Never too Late to Mend.' Some years later you put forth an able and eloquent leader on private asylums, and detailed the sufferings there inflicted on persons known to you. This took root in me, and brought forth its fruit in the second volume of 'Hard Cash.' Later still your hearty and able but temperate leaders on trades unions and trade outrages incited me to an ample study of that great subject, so fit for fiction of the higher order, though not adapted to the narrow minds of bread-and-butter misses, nor of the criticasters who echo those young ladies' idea of fiction and its limits, and thus 'Put Yourself in his Place' was written. Of 'A Terrible Temptation' the leading idea came to me from the 'Times,' viz., from the report of a certain trial, with the comments of counsel, and the remarkable judgment delivered by Mr. Justice Byles." A man who worked in a fashion so characteristic, as he himself says, of Shakespeare and Daniel Defoe and Sir Walter Scott, would be sure, sooner or later, to have his authorities discovered, and to be thereupon accused of plagiarism. It is quite true that the leading ideas of his novels were borrowed from alien sources, sometimes from his promiscuous reading in the French drama. Thus 'Hard Cash' appears to owe something to Macquet's 'Le Pauvre de Paris,' and 'A Double Marriage' to the same author's 'Château Grantier.' 'Foul Play' has some similarity to 'Le Portefeuille Rouge,' and the play of 'Drink' was an

acknowledged adaptation from Zola's 'L'Assommoir.' But originality is a hard matter to define, and is at best a doubtful virtue. The charge of plagiarism Reade meets in the Preface to 'A Simpleton' in the following characteristic fashion :—

"It has lately been objected to me, in studiously courteous terms, of course, that I borrow from other books, and am a Plagiarist. To this I reply that I borrow facts from every accessible source, and am not a Plagiarist. The Plagiarist is one who borrows from a homogeneous work : for such a man borrows not ideas only, but their treatment. He who borrows only from heterogeneous works is not a Plagiarist. All fiction worth a button is founded on facts ; and it does not matter one straw whether the facts are taken from personal experience, hearsay, or printed books ; only those books must not be works of fiction. To those who have science enough to appreciate the above distinction, I am very willing to admit that in all my tales I use a vast deal of heterogeneous material, which in a life of study I have gathered from men, journals, blue-books, histories, biographies, law reports, &c. I rarely write a novel without milking about two hundred heterogeneous cows into my pail, and 'A Simpleton' is no exception to my general method : that method is the true method and the best, and if on that method I do not write prime novels, it is the fault of the man, and not of the method."

Then follow the various sources from which the different parts of the novel were derived, the South African incidents alone being indebted to thirteen different authorities. If we remember that this diligence has been bestowed mainly on subjects of deep national importance, Charles Reade must be considered a public benefactor, even if he had not written a line of romance. Only a short time ago the 'Lancet' and the 'British Medical Journal' were bringing against private lunatic asylums the very accusations which

were urged in 'Hard Cash' and 'A Terrible Temptation,' that they did not attempt to cure an insane patient, and that it was very difficult to procure the release of a sane one. "I am a painstaking man," Reade says very truly of himself, "and I owe my success to it."

Another sentence of personal criticism is equally just, and serves to illustrate, not only his own nature, but also the merits and defects of his literary style. "I bear an indifferent character," he says to the editor of a Toronto paper, "for temper and moderation." Any one who reads through the correspondence published in the volume entitled 'Readiana' can bear ample testimony to the truth of this assertion. And if stress be laid on the least successful points in his style of narrative, it too will be found wanting in temper and moderation. It is too rapid, too terse, too jerky, but for these very reasons it sometimes is able to call up a picture in a series of lightning flashes. Moreover, it has the merits of constant animation and liveliness, and, though often wanting in polish, it, like the best of Reade's characters, is racy of the soil. Especially when dealing with the sea it gains force, picturesqueness, and variety, and no better sample can be found than the gallant fight with the pirate ships with which Dodd's career opens in 'Hard Cash.' But for pure, simple pathos, there is nothing truer and finer than the scene in 'Never too Late to Mend,' where the gold-diggers on Sunday morning gather round to listen to the skylark:—

"Like most singers, he kept them waiting a bit. But, at last, just at noon, when the mistress of the house had warranted



him to sing, the little feathered exile began as it were to tune his pipes. The savage men gathered round his cage that moment, and amidst a dead stillness the bird uttered some very uncertain chirps, but after a while he seemed to revive his memories, and call his ancient cadences back to him one by one, and string them *sotto voce*.

“And then the same sun that had warmed his little heart at home came glowing down on him here, and he gave music back for it more and more, till at last, amidst breathless silence and glistening eyes of the rough diggers hanging on his voice, out burst in that distant land his English song.

“It swelled his little throat and gushed from him with thrilling force and plenty, and every time he checked his song to think of his theme, the green meadows, the quiet stealing streams, the clover he first soared from and the spring he sang so well, a loud sigh from many a rough bosom, many a wild and wicked heart, told how tight the listeners had held their breath to hear him; and when he swelled with song again, and poured with all his soul the green meadows, the quiet brooks, the honey clover and the English spring, the rugged mouths opened and so stayed, and the shaggy lips trembled, and more than one drop trickled from fierce unbridled hearts down bronzed and rugged cheeks.

“Dulce domum.

“And these shaggy men, full of oaths and strife and cupidity, had once been white-headed boys and had strolled about the English fields with little sisters and little brothers, and seen the lark rise and heard him sing this very song. The little playmates lay in the churchyard, and they were full of oaths and drink and lust and remorses, but no note was changed in this immortal song. And so for a moment or two, years of vice rolled away like a dark cloud from the memory, and the past shone out in the song-shine; they came back, bright as the immortal notes that lighted them, those faded pictures, and those fleeted days; the cottage, the old mother’s tears, when he left her without one grain of sorrow; the village church and its simple chimes; the clover-field hard by in which he lay and gambolled, while the lark praised God overhead; the chubby playmates that never grew to be wicked, the sweet hours of youth—and innocence—and home.”

A strain of health and manliness runs through all Reade’s work: it is not all meat for babes, but it is always

on the side of morality. No more unfair charge was ever uttered than that which denounced 'Griffith Gaunt' and 'A Terrible Temptation' as indecent books. Reade is never afraid to handle themes which to delicate susceptibilities may savour of indelicacy; but it is only the prurient prude who could condemn his manner of treatment. For his own part, he is an enthusiastic defender of Faith and Religion: the "last words to mankind" which he had placed on his tombstone breathe a spirit of the simplest Christianity. A vigorous writer, a clear-headed thinker, untroubled by metaphysical mirage or philosophic doubt, with a rare eye for picturesque effects and a rare appreciation for the subtler details of character, Charles Reade was almost, if not quite, a genius, and only just failed in being an artist. By the side of his beloved friend, Mrs. Seymour, in Willesden Churchyard, lie his mortal remains. But his name will live long in the memory of English-speaking races.

## A ROYAL BLUE-STOCKING.

### DESCARTES AND THE PRINCESS ELIZABETH.

“LES femmes ne savent jamais qu'à demi, et le peu qu'elles savent les rend communément fières, dédaigneuses, causeuses, et dégoûtées des choses solides.” So wrote Madame de Maintenon to the ladies of the house of St. Cyr, echoing some sentiments which are to be found in the treatise on ‘L’Education des Filles.’ “Une femme curieuse,” says Fénelon, “qui se pique de savoir beaucoup, se flatte d’être un génie supérieur, et méprise les amusements et les vanités des autres femmes. Elle se croit solide en tout et rien ne la guérit de son entêtement.” “Retenez,” he proceeds, “leur esprit le plus que vous pourrez dans les bornes communes: apprenez-leur qu’il doit y avoir pour leur sexe un pudeur sur la science presque aussi délicate que celle qu’inspire l’horreur du vice.” From which it may be gathered that Madame de Maintenon and the pious archbishop of Cambrai were on this point quite in accord with Molière and his ‘Précieuses Ridicules’ and

‘Femmes Savantes.’ But the seventeenth century was full of noble women, who were sometimes ‘femmes savantes,’ and even ‘femmes philosophes,’ without danger to their womanhood. Among the most distinguished of the latter class was the Princess Palatine, Elizabeth, who enjoyed the friendship of Descartes.

She came of a notorious family. Her father was the unhappy Frederick V., Elector Palatine and King of Bohemia, who lost his crown at the battle of Prague. Her mother, a proud and capricious woman, who appears to have had but little liking for her learned daughter, was Elizabeth Stuart, sister of Charles I. of England. Several of her brothers obtained a distinction more frequently melancholy than they deserved. Rupert, with his heart in reality set on physics and chemistry, was called to be a cavalry officer in the service of his uncle, whose cause he so brilliantly endangered by his reckless hardihood. Maurice disappeared in America. Edward became a convert to Catholicism; and Philip was banished from his home for murdering in the public streets a French gentleman, M. D’Epinay, for whom his mother entertained a somewhat compromising affection. Nor were the sisters much less remarkable. Louise Hollandine, the favourite of the dethroned queen, became abbess of Maubuisson, after joining the Catholic faith. Sophia was the first Electress of Hanover, and mother of George I. of England. Each, moreover, had a distinguished man to be her friend. Louise Hollandine was an artist, and the pupil of the painter Honthorst. Sophia was the Egeria of Leibnitz, at



whose suggestion he wrote his 'Théodicée.' And the Princess Elizabeth, the most charming and the most lovable of the three, after refusing the hand and throne of Wladislas, King of Poland, devoted herself to philosophy, and became the firm friend of Descartes.

A curious chapter in the history of philosophy might be written on the friendships of philosophers, whose most amiable side is frequently to be found in their relationship with women. Descartes, who was not above the weaknesses of his sex, after a singular but mysterious episode in Amsterdam, when, in 1635, he allied himself with a lady called Hélène, and had a daughter called Francine, was fortunate enough to make two royal friendships, the first with Elizabeth, the second with Christina, Queen of Sweden. But the first was incomparably the truer and the better friendship, and the one which most enlisted the heart of the philosopher. Elizabeth became his pupil, and nothing is too good for him to say of the young student.

In 1644, when Elizabeth was about twenty-five and Descartes forty-eight years of age, he dedicated to her his 'Principles' with an effusive gratitude and admiration, couched in language of more than courtly compliment. "Madame," he says in the letter which he wrote on this occasion, "the greatest advantage which I have derived from the writings which I have hitherto published has been the opportunity of your Highness' acquaintance and conversation, which have given me the happiness to remark in you qualities so rare and so estimable that

I believe it to be a public service to propose them as an example for posterity. Flattery would be as much out of place as an idle description of what I do not certainly know, especially in the first pages of a book in which my task is to set forth the principles of all the truths which the human spirit can discover. And the generous modesty which is reflected in all your Highness' actions assures me that the frank words of a man, who only writes what he believes, will be more agreeable to you than the ornate and polished praises of those who have studied the art of compliment. For this reason I will put nothing in this letter except what experience and reason have rendered certain. I will write here as much in the spirit of a philosopher as in the rest of my book. . . . Two things are necessary for wisdom, viz. that the understanding should know all that is good, and that the will should be always disposed to follow it. But only the will can be common to all men, whilst of understanding some have a greater share than others. But although those who are to some extent deficient in intelligence can yet be perfectly wise so far as their nature permits, and render themselves acceptable to God by their virtue, if only they have a firm will to do all the good they know, and to take all diligence to learn what they do not know; yet those who, besides a constant wish for well-doing, and an earnest desire for self-instruction, have also a clear intelligence, undoubtedly attain to a higher pitch of wisdom than others. In your Highness I find all these three things united.

You have so far cared for your self-instruction that neither the distractions of the court nor the usual education of princesses, which is so adverse to literary knowledge, have been able to hinder you from the diligent study of all that is best in the sciences; and you have proved the quality of your intelligence in the rapidity with which you have mastered them. For myself, I have a proof of this in the fact that no one whom I have ever met has had so extensive and so excellent a knowledge of all my writings as yourself. For there are many who find them very obscure, even among the most learned and the cleverest; and I remark that in nearly every case neither the mathematician can understand metaphysics, nor the metaphysician mathematics. You, on the contrary, are the sole person whom I have met to whom both subjects are equally easy; and this gives me good reason to consider your intelligence as quite incomparable. But that which most amazes me is this. So perfect and so wide a knowledge of the sciences is not in this case the possession of some old doctor trained by many years of culture, but belongs to a princess still young, whose face is more that which the poets give to the Graces than that which they attribute to the Muses or the learned Minerva. Finally, I remark in your Highness not only the highest intelligence and the most excellent wisdom, but also a will and a character in which magnanimity and tenderness are united with such a temperament that although fortune has done her best by constant attacks to embitter you, she

has never been able in the least degree either to irritate or to overcome." \*

This is indeed a remarkable tribute on the part of the philosopher to one so much younger than himself. But it is by no means a solitary instance. Here is another passage which almost errs on the side of fulsome and clumsy adulation. Its date is probably May, 1643, and it refers to some letter in which Elizabeth had asked for an explanation of the manner in which body and soul were united. "The favour which your Highness has done me in making me receive your commands in writing is greater than I should have dared to hope for; and it suits my defects better than that which I should have passionately desired, viz. to hear them from your lips, if I had been admitted to do you reverence and to offer you my humble services when I was last in the Hague. I should have had too many wonders to admire at once; and when I heard words more than human issuing from a form such as artists give to angels, I should have been ravished with joy as those must be who have left earth and are just entered into heaven. I should have been less able to answer your Highness, who must already have doubtless remarked this defect in me when I have had the honour of conversing with you. It is your clemency which has wished to alleviate this inability of mine, by leaving the traces of your thoughts on paper, where, reading them over and over again, and accustoming myself to consider them, I am

\* Descartes (Cousin's edition), vol. iii. pp. 3—8. All my references are to the edition of Cousin in eleven volumes. 1824-6.



indeed less astonished, but feel still greater admiration when I discover that they are not only ingenious at first sight, but more judicious and solid the more one examines them." \*

Descartes is undoubtedly in earnest with all this praise ; but it is a little difficult to determine whether it is genuine scientific admiration for Elizabeth's cleverness, or the natural gallantry of a man of heart and a Frenchman. When he writes to her sister Louise, who was a much weaker character in every respect, he is as complimentary as before. "The letter which I have had the honour of receiving from Berlin makes me understand how much I owe your Highness; and considering that those which I write and receive pass through such worthy hands as yours, it seems to me that your sister is like the sovereign Divinity, who employs the good offices of angels to receive the homage of inferior men, and to communicate to them her commands. Since my religion does not prevent me from invoking angels, I beg you to be gracious enough to accept my thanks."† There is in such language some grace of expression, some philosophic pride, and perhaps a shade of irony. But Elizabeth was indeed worthy not only of admiration, but of love. She was young and beautiful; so much of a Protestant that she refused to leave the religion of her family even to become the bride of a king; so much of a genius that at the age of nineteen she read the 'Discourse,' and the 'Essays,' and the 'Meditations' of Descartes with the keenest interest. In her childhood,

\* Cousin, vol. ix. p. 124.

† *Ibid.* p. 402.

under the care of her grandmother, Juliana, the daughter of the great Prince of Orange, she had stored her mind with noble histories and heroic actions. Like all the Stuarts, she was full of the unconscious dignity of royalty. She learnt languages as easily as she mastered sciences. Throughout all her life she was tender, affectionate, and unfortunate. She was by no means the favourite of her mother, who preferred Louise; she loved her brothers, and saw them one by one alienated in different ways from her side; she witnessed the ruin of her Uncle Charles in England, the loss of her closest relations, the death of Rupert, the perversion of Edward, the disgrace and banishment of Philip: over all her race rested the evil star of failure and disappointment, while her one solace was the friendship of Descartes and philosophic self-culture. Here at least she was supreme, and Cartesianism has no brighter page than the tale of this fair young pupil's devotion.

So keen was she in the pursuit of the intellectual life that she at first tried to cement a friendship with a woman eleven years older than herself, who was in every respect the antithesis to her fresh and acute intelligence. Anna Maria von Schurmann was in 1640 the learned lady of Holland. She was the 'star of Utrecht,' 'the tenth of the Muses,' 'quarta Charis, decima est Musarum, mascula Pallas,'—celebrated by poets, worshipped by the learned of every country, the glory of that scholastic pedant Voetius. She read Seneca, Virgil, and Homer, studied the Bible in the original dialects, and in 1641 published a work in

Latin in defence of the intellectual cultivation of women. All the prigs of the time were on their bended knees before her, and commemorated their devotion in the strangest of Latin verse, boasting of their intellectual commerce with her in lines of scholarly coarseness.

“Succuba nemo fuit, nemo fuit incubus, insons  
Virginitas, insons flamma thorisque fuit.”

For this divine Schurmann was indeed sexless.

“Schurmania sexum  
Egregio vincit corpore, mente viros.”\*

She was above all a scholastic, versed in Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas, one who would naturally regard with suspicion the new philosophy of Cartesianism. An incident occurred which fanned the flame of suspicion into active dislike. Descartes came to see her at Utrecht, and found her immersed in a study of the Bible in the original Hebrew. The philosopher was astonished that a person of such merit should waste so much time over “une chose de si peu d’importance,” and when Mdlle. Schurmann protested that it was rather a matter of capital importance, Descartes answered that he had himself tried to read the first chapter of Genesis, but that he had failed to find anything which he could understand clearly and distinctly (*clarè et distinctè*). As therefore he could not understand Moses, who instead of giving him any new light only served to confuse him still further, he had determined to renounce the study. Naturally the gifted

\* Foucher de Careil. ‘Descartes et la Princesse-Palatine,’ p. 34.

lady was much alarmed at this candour ; she took a violent dislike to Descartes, and made an entry into her diary in which she thanked God that He had alienated her heart from "this profane man."\* The antipathy was mutual, for Descartes also has a note about the theological student. "This Voetius (her teacher) has also spoilt Mdlle. von Schurmann ; for albeit that she had an excellent taste for poetry, painting, and other refinements of the kind, he has now for five or six years possessed her so entirely that she only occupies herself with theological controversies, and has lost the conversation of all honest men." The Princess Elizabeth, as has been already said, was a friend of Mdlle. Schurmann : it was necessary therefore that she should be warned against the dangerous seductions of Descartes. "It is quite true," she says in a letter to Elizabeth, "that I have a profound esteem for the scholastic doctors," and she then gives the reason in the following passage, which contains an unmistakable reference to Descartes. "For them it has been sufficient glory to allow themselves to be guided by those two great stars of divine and human science, Saint Augustine and Aristotle, whose glory can never be obscured, *however much of fog and chaotic error men have striven to oppose to their brilliant light.*" But though Descartes had undoubtedly earned the dislike of the orthodox theologians, Elizabeth is too little of a scholastic to be offended with the new culture. Descartes is introduced into the court of the Bohemian Queen,

\* "Beinfaits du Seigneur : Dieu a éloigné mon cœur de l'homme profane." Foucher de Careil, p. 62.



and while the mother receives him with politeness, the daughter accepts him as her teacher and her friend. Henceforth no alliance with Schurmann is possible; the companionship is broken off, only to be resumed again after Descartes' death. Baillet in his life of Descartes tells us that no sooner had she read the essays of Descartes than she conceived so strong a passion for his teaching that she counted as nothing all she had previously learnt, and desired only to build anew on more solid foundations. And Sorbière (in his *Sorberiana*), who was a friend of Gassendi, and therefore not disposed towards Cartesianism, cannot refrain from a burst of admiration for the princess. "Wonders are told of this rare person: to a knowledge of language she adds that of the sciences; she will not amuse herself with scholastic nonsense, but desires to know things clearly; she has a keen intelligence and a solid judgment, likes to make dissections and experiments, has at her court a minister who is held to be a Socinian, seems to be about twenty years of age, and has the beauty of a veritable heroine."

But Elizabeth is by no means an unintelligent disciple of her great master. After reading the earlier works, the '*Discours*' and the '*Méditations Métaphysiques*,' she puts her finger on one of the weak points. Nothing in all the celebrated objections made to the Cartesian system by such masters as Hobbes and Gassendi, Craterus and Arnauld, so effectively struck the point whence subsequent philosophy was to proceed, either in the way of explanation or of transformation, as the simple question propounded by

the princess: "ce qu'il faut penser de l'union de l'âme avec le corps." For it was exactly that which Cartesianism could not answer. The soul was one thing, with its special attribute, thought, or self-consciousness; the body another, with its attribute peculiar to itself, viz. extension. But the more each of the two opposed terms was kept in its exclusive isolation, with definitions intended to preserve the essence in each case absolutely distinct, the more difficult was it to realize how the two things could be conjoined to make one human being. If soul was all thought, and the body all matter, how could soul move body by its volitions, how could body move soul by its sensations? Man was obviously one, and yet his component parts were two irreconcilable entities. Moreover, Descartes had found the seat of the soul, and declared it to be the conarion or pineal gland in the brain. If this were truly local, must not such a locality be a part of space; must not the soul be itself extended? And if extended, what becomes of the special characteristic which was to distinguish soul from matter? Is the soul material, or is the body itself spiritually discerned? Such were the difficulties which led to the speculations of Geulincx and Malebranche, and were finally absorbed in the pantheistic system of Spinoza. When Descartes has such a problem put before him he knows not what to say. In two letters to the princess\* he fences and evades the point, now falling back on compliments, now making a distinction between the understanding, the imagination, and the senses. But of

\* Cousin, vol. ix. pp. 123, 129.

real answer there is none. Nor could there be, till Cartesianism became either Occasionalism or Spinozism. Incidentally, however, he makes the curious remark that metaphysics should have only one hour a year given to it, while mathematics should be studied for one hour a day, and the practical science of life—the verdict, that is to say, of the senses and the lessons of experience—should get the rest of our working life. This is a strange commentary on his early writings, but perhaps Descartes felt that in writing to a woman he should warn her off the congenial ground of mysticism and *schwärmerei*.

In 1644 Descartes, who had now written his ‘Principles,’ dedicated the work to the Princess Elizabeth, with the lavish and magnificent encomium which has before been quoted. Perhaps it was not the best gift he could have chosen for her, for of all Descartes’ writings his physical theories and the automatism of animals seem to have interested her least. What she cared for was his psychology, and what she desired him to accomplish was a compendium of ethical doctrine. For in the succeeding years, 1645—1648, misfortune after misfortune invaded her ill-starred life. Disliked, as we have seen, by her mother, and abandoned by her sister Louise and her brother Edward, both of whom had abjured the Protestant faith, she had the additional misery of suffering under an unjust charge. Her younger brother Philip had conceived a great animosity to the Marquis d’Epinay, who was rumoured to be too close a favourite of the queen-mother. In a public brawl in the streets Philip had assassinated



the Frenchman, and was banished for life. Elizabeth was suspected of complicity in this murder, and forced to leave the court and migrate to Berlin to the Elector of Brandenburg.\* Nor were foreign troubles wanting to complete the princess' dejection. She saw the Stuart cause irretrievably ruined in England, involving with it the loss of the gallant Rupert and the execution of her unhappy uncle, Charles I. Her health gave way, and she tried in vain to recover it at the waters of Spa and elsewhere. In such circumstances mathematics and metaphysics had but little strength to console. She wanted a theory of life, she desired to know where happiness was to be found, or if not happiness, at least contentment. And she turned to Descartes as to a friend, whose philosophical intellect might counsel her how best to bear her destiny.

Descartes did not fail to answer the appeal. First he tells her to try and look at the bright side of things, quoting his own example. "You ought," he says, "to unburden your spirit of all sad thoughts and even of all serious meditations on the sciences, and try to imitate those who passively watch the verdure of a wood, the colours of a flower, the flight of a bird. I know that it is not so much the theory as the practice which is difficult here; but I may quote my own case. I was born of a mother who died shortly after my birth of a disease of

\* The details of the murder of D'Epinay are most obscure. Elizabeth was probably entirely innocent, despite the insinuations of Baillet. See Kuno Fischer's 'Descartes' (Eng. edition), p. 221, and Foucher de Careil, 'Descartes et la Princesse,' p. 53.



the lungs, and I inherited from her a dry cough and a sallow complexion, which made all my doctors condemn me to an early death. But the inclination which I have always had to look at the bright side of things, and to make my principal contentment depend on myself alone, has gradually cured my indisposition." \* Then in a succeeding letter he sends her to Seneca, and recommends her to read the 'De Vita Beata.' She found but little help in this, however, and he himself acknowledges that the Roman Stoic had no particular lessons for him. He proceeds to formulate a theory of his own, first of all referring her to the three moral rules which he had laid down in the 'Discours de la Méthode.' To be happy requires three things: a man should try to make the best use he can of his intelligence; he should have a firm resolution to carry out all that his reason counsels; and thirdly, he should cease to desire what is out of his own power.† A true theory of morals should seek to harmonize the tenets of the Stoics, the Epicurean and the Aristotelian schools;‡ while the ultimate principles on which Ethics depend are God, the soul, and the immensity of the universe. For only by discerning how small a fraction of the world is man, do we learn the lesson of not opposing our interests to the whole to which we belong, and the knowledge of our littleness brings with it not only the duty of resignation but of content.§ The result of these letters is that Descartes seriously undertakes a work on Ethics, and the

\* Cousin, vol. ix. p. 203.

‡ *Ibid.* pp. 220-1.

† *Ibid.* pp. 212, 213.

§ *Ibid.* pp. 230-3.

treatise on 'Les Passions de l'Ame' has the sorrows of Elizabeth for its proximate cause and its inspiration.

The letter which Descartes wrote on the death of Charles I. should not be omitted. He knew how much the tender heart of his pupil must have suffered on hearing of the tragic fate of her uncle, and he takes up his pen to offer such condolence as is in his power. "Amongst the many sad pieces of intelligence which I have received from diverse quarters at once, that which has most touched me has been the illness of your Highness, and although I have also learnt your recovery, it cannot efface from my spirit the traces of the suffering it has caused. Your inclination to write poetry in your illness reminds me of Socrates, of whom Plato narrates a similar trait, when in prison. And I believe that this poetic humour comes from a great agitation in the animal spirits" ('esprits animaux'—a famous physiological theory of Descartes) "which entirely upsets the imagination of the weak-headed, but only enkindles the strong and disposes them to poetry; and I take this tendency to be the mark of a spirit of uncommon strength and elevation. Did I not know that yours was such, I should have feared in your case a terrible affliction, when you heard the tragic conclusion of the tragedies of England. But I assure myself that your Highness is no tiro in misfortune; you have lately been in great peril of your life, and experience has taught you to bear without surprise or despair the death of one of your nearest relations. I grant that this violent death seems to be more awful than one endured in a bed of sickness; yet, viewed

aright, it is more glorious, more happy, more precious. It is surely matter for glory to die in circumstances which call forth universal pity, praise, and regret from all who have any fellow-feeling or sympathy. Assuredly, without this ordeal, the clemency and the other virtues of the king would never have been so much noticed and esteemed as they are now, and will be hereafter by all those who shall read his history. I am sure that his conscience has given him more satisfaction during the last moments of his life than his indignation—the sole infirmity which was remarked in him—could have given him trouble. As for the pain of dying, I make no account of that; for it was so short that, if his murderers could have made use of fever, or some other of those maladies by which nature cuts us off, they would justly have been considered more cruel than they were when they killed him with the axe. I dare not linger any longer on so tragic a theme. I will only add that it is better to be delivered once for all from a false hope than to be vainly beguiled.”\*

Did, however, Elizabeth get from the kindly philosopher all that her spirit needed? It may be doubted whether she found balm in such a Gilead. It is hard to tell a woman to live the life of reason; it is harder still for a woman to acknowledge that the only good in life is the possession of understanding. Her nature demands some emotional satisfaction which is not attained by the philosophical discovery that “all our appetites are desires, and all our passions are thoughts.” In the colourless region

\* Cousin, vol. x. pp. 297-9.

of the intellectual life she does not recognize her own warm, richly-hued, imaginative existence. The art of happiness, the supremacy of reason, the nonentities of desire fall upon her ears like idle words when she sets them in contrast with the beating heart and inconsistent impulses of her own sensitive humanity. Was love in reality that which Descartes described it in his famous letter to Chanut, the French ambassador at the court of Sweden? \* Could it be trained so as to be wholly intellectual, its passionate forms being merely a survival, an evidence of an immature age? After Descartes' death, Elizabeth had another sort of answer given to her life-problems. From Jean de Labadie, from George Fox and William Penn she learnt that the end of life was not happiness, but the love of sacrifice.

The closing years of Elizabeth's life form a remarkable sequel to her philosophical enlightenment. In 1649, after many hesitations, Descartes accepted the invitation of the Queen of Sweden to come to her court. One of his principal reasons seems to have been the desire to make Christina and Elizabeth friends, and so to enlist on behalf of the unfortunate Princess Palatine the powerful help of the Swedish court. But Descartes, despite his psychology, did not know much of the feminine mind. Christina transferred Descartes to Stockholm, but utterly ignored Descartes' female friend. She would brook no rival allegiance on the part of the philosopher, and the letters of Elizabeth remained

\* Cousin, vol. x. p. 3. This was the letter which so pleased Queen Christina, and led to Descartes' fatal visit to Sweden.



unanswered. In 1650 Descartes succumbed to the inclement air of Sweden, and seventeen years afterwards Elizabeth found an asylum in the Lutheran abbey of Herforden in Westphalia. There, as abbess, she offered a home to all who were persecuted for righteousness' sake, and her old friend, Anna von Schurmann, brought with her Jean de Labadie and his sect, succeeded afterwards by William Penn and his Quakers. It is singular to find that in her old age Elizabeth returns to the friend of her youth, and Schurmann is not slow to profit by the removal of that "profane man," Descartes.

In truth the princess herself became somewhat of a mystic. William Penn gained an extraordinary influence over her mind, and after one of his discourses at Herforden, she advanced to meet him, faltering out a few words of thanks. "Will you never come back here? I pray you to return." Penn answered, "We are under the commands of God: we are in His hands, and cannot make any sure promises." Then the princess bade him farewell. "Remember me," she said, "though I live so far from you, and though you will never see me again. I thank you for the sweet hours you have made me pass; and I know and am persuaded that though my position exposes me to many temptations, my soul is strongly inclined towards good." Penn fell on his knees and prayed God to bless and preserve his protectress and his friend.\* The intimacy thus formed was kept up by many letters which passed on both sides.

\* Foucher de Careil, p. 72.

But was the memory of Descartes obliterated in these new interests of the abbess of Herforden? We know that Descartes never forgot his old pupil. In the last letter which he wrote to her from Sweden, not many months before his death, he says, "One of the first things which I esteem to be my duty is to renew my offers of humble service to your Highness. Change of air and country can never change or diminish aught of my devotion and my zeal." With this we are fortunately able to compare the last letter of Elizabeth, which was written to her sister, the abbess of Maubuisson, thirty years after Descartes' death:—"I live still, my dear sister, but it is only to prepare myself for death. The doctors can make nothing further of my illness, therefore I make no further use of their medicines. But they agree that it proceeds from a lack of natural heat and of vital spirits which they know not how to supply, with all their science. My attendant has told my people that I ought to put my affairs in order for fear of being surprised, which means that for me this world is over. Nothing remains for me at this hour but to prepare to give up to God a soul washed in the blood of my Saviour. I know it to be stained with many sins—especially this, that I have preferred the creature to the Creator, and have lived for my own glory, which is a kind of idolatry. This it is which makes me suffer the pains which I feel every day with joy, knowing that it is just that this body should suffer for the sins which it has made me commit. To take up the cross is my appointed task, to follow it for its glory alone, renouncing myself and

submitting myself entirely to its will. . . . Adieu, my dear sister; I hope that we shall see one another again in another world, and that God will prepare us so well in this transitory life that hereafter we shall see His face for evermore." \*

Certainly Elizabeth had learnt something more than Descartes had taught her. There is in this letter a note of renunciation which goes beyond the limits of his philosophy. But as Descartes had not forgotten her, neither has she wholly forgotten him. Not only, as Baillet has told us, did she make her abbey a sort of Cartesian academy, bringing there her love of science and her taste for philosophy, but she lets fall an expression in this letter which suddenly transports us to the Hague. It may be that in her self-styled preference of the creature to the Creator she may be thinking of some of her earlier studies, but when she talks of "vital spirits," we hear once more the technical language of Descartes.

\* Foucher de Careil, p. 75. The letter is in the British Museum.

## PASCAL, THE SCEPTIC.

No book, probably, has had so curious a literary history as Pascal's 'Pensées,' and, perhaps for that reason, no book has been so differently interpreted. For more than a century and a half, from the first edition in 1670 to the celebrated 'Rapport' of Victor Cousin, it was naturally considered to be the literary expression of the dominant convictions of Port Royal. It was subsequently discovered that it was only the mouthpiece of such mediocre thinkers as Etienne Périer and the Duc de Roannez, issued, perhaps, under the authority of Antoine Arnauld and Nicole. By a curious freak of fortune it was taken up by Condorcet and Voltaire in 1776 and 1778, but it is only since Cousin first restored the text of the genuine Pascal, which les Messieurs de Port Royal had mutilated, transposed, and re-written, that such editions as those of Faugère in 1844 and Havet in 1852 have become possible. And what sort of Pascal has the genuine text revealed? a fanatic, as Voltaire supposed? or a Catholic, as M. l'Abbé Maynard has laboriously undertaken to prove in the two volumes he issued in 1850? Is he a disguised Protestant, as M. Vinet and perhaps also Mr. Charles Beard seem inclined to think,



or was M. Victor Cousin right when he summarily declared him to be a sceptic? The controversy is by no means yet extinguished, for Pascal's name is equally cherished by literature and theology, and it is not often that a man has left behind him two works so diametrically opposed in spirit and in form as the 'Provincial Letters' and the 'Thoughts.' If the first was one of the earliest and most perfect achievements of French prose-writing, the second was only a somewhat heterogeneous mass of disjointed aphorisms; while the 'Letters' derive half their glory from their noble vindication of the rights of reason against ecclesiastical dogmatism, the 'Thoughts' are the gloomy record of a mind which was prepared to throw overboard every kind of knowledge at the bidding of authority, and to retain as elements of chief value the three qualities of 'pyrrhonien,' 'géomètre,' and 'Chrétien soumis.' "Il faut avoir," says Pascal, "ces trois qualités, pyrrhonien, géomètre, Chrétien soumis; et elles s'accordent, et se tempèrent, en doutant où il faut, en assurant où il faut, en se soumettant où il faut."

With the true text of the 'Pensées' before us, and with Cousin's report to the Academy in our hands, it is difficult to overlook the obvious scepticism of Pascal—scepticism, be it understood, in philosophy, not in religion. Sceptic he appears at almost every page, and all the more savagely sceptic because he thought that this was the only portal to a belief in Revelation. He probably had not studied much philosophy, certainly not so much as either Arnauld or Nicole, for his talents lay rather in the direction of

geometry and science, but he does not hesitate to express his opinion of all philosophy. "Se moquer de la philosophie, c'est vraiment philosopher;" such is his decisive phrase. Descartes, whom Arnauld especially had introduced into Port Royal, he cannot away with. "Je ne puis pardonner à Descartes." "Descartes. Il faut dire en gros cela se fait pas figure et mouvement, car cela est vrai. Mais de dire quels, et composer la machine, cela est ridicule; car cela est inutile, et incertain, et pénible. Et quand cela seroit vrai, nous n'estimons pas que toute la philosophie vaille une heure de peine." The only true philosophy is the negation of all philosophy, and therefore the only true philosophical system is Pyrrhonism. "Le pyrrhonisme est le vrai; car, après tout, les hommes, avant Jésus-Christ, ne savoient où ils en étoient, ni s'ils étoient grands ou petits." "Toute la dignité de l'homme est en la pensée. Mais qu'est-ce que cette pensée? Qu'elle est sotte!" "Connaissez-donc, superbe, quel paradoxe vous êtes à vous-même. Humiliez-vous, raison impuissante; taisez-vous, nature imbecile!" "La belle chose de crier à un homme, qui ne se connoit pas, qu'il aille de lui-même à Dieu! et la belle chose de le dire à un homme qui se connoit!" "Mon Dieu, que ce sont des sots discours! 'Dieu auroit-il fait le monde pour le damner? demanderoit-il tant de gens si foibles?' etc. Pyrrhonisme est le remède à ce mal, et rabattra cette vanité." The one philosopher whom Pascal thoroughly knew was Montaigne the sceptic, and though he ventures to criticize him here and there, his influence is visible at every page. And it is not only thoughts which Pascal

borrows from Montaigne, he uses his expressions. Here is a short list of words and phrases, taken from Montaigne's vocabulary, which are found in the 'Pensées.' Montaigne had written, "Le seul moyen que je prends pour *rabattre* cette frénésie." Pascal uses the word in the sentence quoted above: "Pyrrhonisme rabattra cette vanité." Pascal says, "Les enfants qui s'effrayent du visage qu'ils ont *barbouillé*;" and Montaigne, "Les enfants qui s'effrayent de ce même visage qu'ils ont barbouillé." "Le nœud de notre condition prend des replis," in Pascal, is taken bodily from Montaigne's "Ce devrait être un nœud prenant ses replis." The expression "avoir des prises" is common to the two writers. Montaigne had written, "Si les prises humaines étaient assez capables pour saisir la vérité;" and Pascal repeats, "Voyons si elle a quelques forces et quelques prises capables de saisir la vérité." Other characteristic phrases are used by both: for instance, the verb 'couvrir,' in the sense of 'conceal'; 'gagner sur moi, sur lui,' in the sense of 'induce'; 'rapporter à,' in the sense of 'avoir rapport à'; 'tendu,' in the sense of 'prolonged'; and 'transi,' in the sense of 'transported.' Here, too, is a curious instance. Pascal wrote, "Un corps qui nous *aggrave* et nous abaisse vers la terre:" apparently quoting Horace: "Corpus animum . . . . *prægravat* atque affligit," but only doing so in the form in which Montaigne quotes him: "Corruptibile corpus *aggravat* animam."\* But perhaps the most significant case is the

\* Perhaps, however, both writers were quoting from the 'Book of Wisdom' in the Latin version (Lib. Sap. ix. 15).

employment of the word 'abêtir,' in Pascal's celebrated argument of 'taking the odds' as to the existence or non-existence of God: "Cela vous fera croire et vous abêtira." Montaigne had already said, "Il faut nous abestir pour nous assagir."

The argument itself, from which these last words are taken, is so astounding, both in conception and expression, that to most religious minds it has appeared little short of profane. Yet it is, after all, perfectly consistent with the attitude of a man who starts with the belief that all human reason and natural understanding are, owing to the Fall, incurably diseased and unprofitable. It is certainly rather more daring in expression, but also more logical than the language which a Jesuit or a Calvinist would allow himself, and the *humeur bouillante* which his sister Jacqueline found in Pascal, explains much of the passionate intensity of the phrases. If human reason be corrupt at its core, there can be of course no natural theology, and no rational proof of God's existence. Pascal is very explicit on this point. "I shall not attempt," he says, "to prove by natural reasons either the existence of God or the immortality of the soul, or anything else of the like character; not only because I should not feel myself capable of finding anything in nature whereby to convince hardened Atheists, but also because such knowledge, without Jesus Christ, is useless and sterile. It is remarkable," he proceeds, "that no canonical author has ever made use of nature to prove God. They must have been cleverer than the cleverest men who have



succeeded them, for the latter have all made this attempt.” “Eh quoi ! ne dites-vous pas vous-même que le ciel et les oiseaux prouvent Dieu ? Non. Et votre religion ne le dit-elle pas ? Non. Car encore que cela est vrai en un sens pour quelques âmes à qui Dieu donne cette lumière, néanmoins cela est faux à l’égard de la plupart.” It is perhaps a little astonishing that Pascal should have read his Bible to such little effect. The Psalmist, at all events, thought that the heavens were telling the glory of God, and St. Paul declared in his Epistle to the Romans, that God had made Himself known by His works since the creation of the world. But Pascal was more versed in St. Augustine and Jansen than in the Scriptures. To him there was no natural proof of God, for, without God’s special grace, man’s understanding and will were alike incapable. Hence, so far as reason was concerned, there was no greater likelihood of God’s existence than of his non-existence ; “the odds,” as he says, “were even.” But if the question be one not of reason, but of interest, there was a clear preponderance of advantage on the side of belief. Even if God did not exist, there could be no harm in believing Him to exist ; but if He did exist, how perilous in the future might be disbelief ! It might make all the difference between happiness and damnation. On the ground of self-interest, therefore, as reason was neutral, it was clearly better to believe. “Et ainsi notre proposition est dans une force infinie, quand il y a le fini à hasarder à un jeu où il y a pareils hasards de gain que de perte, et l’infini à gagner. Cela est démonstratif : si les hommes

sont capables de quelques vérités, celle-là l'est." "Je le confesse," answers Pascal's imaginary interlocutor, "je l'avoue; mais encore n'y a-t-il point moyen de voir le dessous du jeu? Oui, l'Ecriture. Mais j'ai les mains liées et la bouche muette; on me force à parier, et je ne suis pas en liberté; je suis fais d'une telle sorte que je ne puis croire. Que voulez vous donc que je fasse?" Pascal can only reply that he must do as others in the like difficulty have done, take sacred water and have masses said. "Naturellement même cela vous fera croire et vous abêтира. Mais c'est ce que je crains. Et pourquoi? qu'avez-vous à perdre?" Such is this appalling argument in all its naked appeal to expediency. It has often been doubted whether all the hermit's excessive anxiety about his own soul was not a rather coarse form of selfishness. Here, at all events, a selfish system is reinforced by the appropriate arguments of a more than cool self-love. Meanwhile, however consistent Pascal's treatment of these questions may be with his Jansenism and his devotion to Montaigne, there occur obvious difficulties in comprehending his scheme. If there is no natural light of reason in men, if all purely human understanding and virtue are alike vitiated according to the doctrine of original sin, why write a book on Christian evidences at all? Yet that such was the intention of the '*Pensées*' is open to no doubt. The miracle performed on Marguerite Périer, Pascal's niece, the so-called miracle of the Holy Thorn, inspired Pascal with the idea of writing a work which should convince the world of the truth of Christianity.

If the world could not apart from the grace of God, which was *ex hypothesi* absent, have any natural understanding, the value of Pascal's 'Pensées' would be infinitesimal. Or again, how could, on Pascal's own showing, a revelation of God to men be possible? "Parlons suivant les lumières naturelles. S'il y a un Dieu, il est infiniment incompréhensible, puisque n'ayant ni parties ni bornes, il n'a nul rapport à nous." But if God has no relation to men how can He reveal Himself to men? Either the Revelation is a fact, and then God must have some relation to men's faculties, or else it is not a fact, and then the whole of Pascal's reconstruction of Christianity on the foundation of philosophical scepticism falls to the ground. But it is useless to argue with Pascal in the mood in which he wrote the 'Pensées.' It is more instructive to see how wide is the interval which separates the writer of these Thoughts from the immortal author of the 'Provincial Letters.' Could the aim of the earlier work be better described than as the defence of Reason against ecclesiastical pretensions? What meant the scathing ridicule of "le pouvoir prochain" and "la grâce suffisante" except to discredit that system of authoritative belief which was supported by the Jesuits? What doctrine could the advocate of Port Royal find more damaging to morality than 'probabilism' and casuistry? Yet here is Pascal himself urging arguments of probabilism, and fighting the battle of those very Jesuits on whom he had before poured the righteous vials of his wrath. May a man use his private judgment, and decide by the light of the common

understanding, whether truth be on this side or that? No; he must lower the colours of reason before authority: "pour nous assagir, il faut nous abestir," with a sure confidence that we have, as Pascal says, "nothing to lose." There was a bishop of Avranches, one Huet, who adopts the precise attitude of Pascal, both in his attack on Cartesianism and in his recommendation of scepticism; but he was the friend of the Jesuits, served them all his life, and died in their communion. He was the author of a 'Censure de la Philosophie Cartésienne,' and of a 'Traité Philosophique de la Foiblesse de l'Esprit Humain,' in which he declares, after the manner of Pascal's "le pyrrhonisme c'est le vrai," that "les sceptiques sont les seuls qui méritent le nom de philosophes." And Cousin has remarked that while none of the great writers of the seventeenth century ever mention Pascal's 'Pensées,' a warm recommendation comes from the school of La Rochefoucauld. Madame de Lafayette, who speaks as the secretary of the author of the 'Maximes,' declared, "C'est méchant signe pour ceux qui ne goûteront pas ce livre." Huet and La Rochefoucauld, the Jesuits and the egoists, such are Pascal's new-found allies. It is not surprising that Nicole, the moralist of Port Royal, though he warmly co-operated in the 'Provincial Letters,' could not conceal his dislike for the 'Thoughts,' and that Arnauld, the Port Royalist philosopher, "Arnauld, le grand Arnauld," as Boileau describes him, should have done his best to erase from Pascal's posthumous work its sceptical tendencies. Speaking of Pascal's remarks on justice, which were



conceived in the spirit of Montaigne, he says in a letter to M. Périer, "Pour vous parler franchement, je crois que cet endroit est insoutenable." A modern reader, who is not too much blinded by the well-merited glory of the 'Provincial Letters,' finds more passages than one which are 'insoutenables.'

If Pascal be compared with the other heroes of Port Royal, who were either his contemporaries or immediate predecessors—St. Cyran, Singlin, Arnauld, Nicole, de Saçi—it will be seen how different from theirs are both his character and his position. Singlin and de Saçi were the great confessors of Port Royal, men whose sweetness and sincerity made them noble, but who had towards culture and enlightenment either a neutral or a repellent attitude. De Saçi and Pascal were indeed united in one point, a common dislike to Descartes, but were alike in little else. According to de Saçi, Descartes was in relation to Aristotle as a robber who killed another robber and took off his spoils, and perhaps it was in some measure due to de Saçi, whose task it was to teach Pascal "*mépriser les sciences*," that his pupil wrote, "*Je ne puis pardonner a Descartes*." But Pascal, whose early training in science distinguished him from these clerics, outran them also in dogmatic zeal and polemical ability. Arnauld and Nicole, on the other hand, were men of much broader judgment and tolerant good sense than the author of the '*Pensées*.' Both were opposed to him on the capital question of signing the formulary, desiring for the sake of peace to acquiesce in the wishes of their ecclesiastical superiors, while Pascal

and his sister Jacqueline were for obstinate refusal. Both Nicole and Arnauld again, were imbued with Cartesianism ; the Port Royal Logic which they wrote in common being a practical exposition of some of the principles of Descartes. And in the matter of scepticism and the Pyrrhonists, they were equally decided in their opposition to Pascal and Montaigne. "Le pyrrhonisme," wrote Nicole, "n'est pas une secte de gens qui soient persuadés de ce qu'ils disent, mais c'est une secte de menteurs." Neither Nicole nor Arnauld were, in fact, fanatics ; and Nicole, who had never come under the influence of St. Cyran, even went so far as to substitute a theory of general grace for the special and peculiar grace of the Jansenists. Here Arnauld could not follow. In anything which touched on the authority of Jansen he was unalterably firm in his attachment to his master, the great St. Cyran. If there was one man who ruined Port Royal from the point of view of the world it was St. Cyran. Without him Port Royal would not have been famous, but it would have been safe. It was he who, owing to his friendship with Cornelius Jansen, forced upon the Cistercian monastery the doctrines of the 'Augustinus,' which afterwards led to the expulsion of Arnauld from the Sorbonne, and formed the immediate occasion for the 'Provincial Letters.' St. Cyran was at once a theologian and a great ruler of men. He wrote books which were the talk of his age, and Richelieu once pointed him out as "the most learned man in Europe." With his rare force of character he had also the power both to select the right men for his purpose and mould

them as he would. It was he who saw the value of those two great engines of influence, education and the confessional; for he was the real author of the Port Royal schools, and through the mouth of Singlin and de Saçi, he ruled over the consciences of the sisters and the penitents, even from the depths of his prison at Vincennes. His was the power and range of a great intellectual character, while Pascal's strength lay rather in the narrow intensity of his emotions.

The key-note to Pascal's character is seen by his sister, when she refers to his *humeur bouillante*. It was the passionate keenness of his disposition which explains at once his success and his failure. In the earlier stage of his life, when he was full of scientific tastes and predilections, there was nothing which he took up which he did not carry out with singular neatness and precision. Without the assistance of Euclid, he worked out for himself Euclid's propositions. His experiments on the Puy de Dôme formed the exact proof that was wanting to establish the fact of atmospheric pressure. He astonishes his age by inventing a calculating machine, and distances all other competitors in the rapidity and completeness of his theory of the Cycloid. When he turns from science to literature, there is the same originality, the same triumphant and rapid footstep, the same brilliance of result. He has not got the constructive and comprehensive mind of Descartes nor the erudition of Arnauld; but though he is the author of no system, his 'Provincial Letters,' both in the exquisite raillery of the earlier ones and the



passionate rhetoric of the later, mark an era in the history of French prose and world-literature. But this intensity and keenness of character equally account for other traits in Pascal, which are not so amiable or so helpful to the world. They explain his sudden changes of life, his narrow enthusiasms his wild fanaticism, his almost splendid wrong-headedness. There is some doubt whether Descartes suggested to Pascal the experiment on the Puy de Dôme in 1648, or whether the idea was wholly Pascal's own. But when a letter from Descartes is shown to Pascal by Carcavi the mathematician, claiming the originality of the idea, Pascal is outraged, affects first to despise the letter, and then angrily denies its truth. Yet both Baillet and Montucla, the first in his life of Descartes, the second in his '*Histoire des Mathématiques*,' appear to prove that Pascal was anything but just to his predecessor. When in 1646 his father brings him into contact for the first time with Port Royalist teachers, it is Pascal whose young religious ardour serves to convert not only himself but his sister Jacqueline also. Jacqueline, indeed, affords many points of similarity with her brother; she has the same ardent zeal, the same inflexible devotion to that cause which she has once espoused. But this passionate sensibility to new ideas perhaps is more often found in women than in men, and in Pascal himself the gusty violence of his temperament often strikes one as feminine. Yet Jacqueline is, at all events, more consistent than her brother. When once she is converted through her brother's instrumentality, she does not waver again, but carries through her decision



to join the nuns even in the teeth of the opposition of both her father Etienne and her brother Blaise. But she has to bewail the comparative changeableness of the very man who first led her to become dead to the world, and when Pascal finally joined Port Royal in 1654, she had already been for some years an inhabitant of the monastery. From 1652 to nearly the end of 1654, there is an interval of some two years and a half, during which Blaise Pascal has apparently forgotten his religious fervour, and has after the death of his father become master of his own fortunes and entered the gay world of Paris. How was that interval spent? It is difficult to say. He was certainly known in the salons of the capital, and probably figured in the assemblies of Madame de Sablé, Madame de Lafayette, and Madame de Longueville; and to the Port Royal ascetics he appeared indubitably as a worldling. Once launched in the gaities of Paris, his keen ardour probably led him to satisfy his curiosity in amusements which might be indiscreet and were certainly unedifying. We are not without positive evidence on this point. To this period belongs that curious fragment which Cousin discovered, the 'Discours sur les Passions de l'Amour,' and though it is hard to imagine Pascal in love, yet Faugère has not hesitated to suggest that the object of his affection was the sister of his friend the Duc de Roannez. A somewhat dubious confirmation of Pascal's weaknesses is furnished by the memoirs of Fléchier cited by M. Gonod. It appears that a certain lady, "qui était la Sapho du pays," was to be found at Clermont, and that "M. Pascal, qui s'est

depuis acquis tant de réputation, et un autre savant, étaient continuellement auprès de cette belle savante." But perhaps it is more charitable to suppose that this amorous personage is not the same as our hero of the *humeur bouillante*.

Then succeeds that memorable change, called by his historians his second conversion, in the latter part of 1654, from which date Pascal is for ever lost to science and to the world, and for ever won for theology and the Church. It is prefaced by two events: first the accident at the Pont de Neuilly, when Pascal, driving in a carriage, sees his horses precipitated into the river while he is himself preserved through the providential breaking of the traces; second, the experiences of the night of Monday, November 23rd, 1654. After Pascal's death a servant discovered in his waistcoat a little parcel which had been evidently worn, stitched up in his clothes, from day to day. The parcel contained two copies, one on parchment, the other written on paper, of a marvellous document relating a vision or series of visions which had happened to him from 10.30 P.M. to 12.30 P.M. on the night in question. The document begins with the mysterious word 'Feu,' and contains the following significant phrases among many others which are of highly mystical import: "Dieu d'Abraham, Dieu d'Isaac, Dieu de Jacob: non des philosophes et des savans. Certitude, certitude, sentimens, vue, joie, paix. Oubli du monde, et de tout hormis Dieu. Reconciliation totale et douce. Soumission totale à Jesus Christ et à mon Directeur." This is the so-called 'amulet' of Pascal. Amulet it was not, but rather the record of some

singular and awful experiences which Pascal wished for ever to remember. Whatever view we may take of it, it is certain that it marks the turning-point in his life. Henceforth, the adieux had been said to the society of Paris, and to the love of science, and the new life begins at Port Royal; the new life of monkish seclusion and fanatical austerity. To the God, not of philosophers and scientists, but of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the penitent turns. And he carries even into the changed conditions the wonted eagerness, the same passionate zeal, the old *humeur bouillante*. He will outdo all others in the ardour of his converted zeal. Arnauld might study Descartes, but for himself he could not forgive him. De Saçi might turn aside from knowledge and philosophy; Pascal will trample them under his feet. Let others make terms if they will with the Jesuits, he will expose all their casuistical chicanery and perverted morals. Nicole might wish the Formulary to be signed, but Pascal and Jacqueline will stand out alone. Pascal himself fainted away at the idea of any proposed compromise with the enemies of Jansenism; and poor Jacqueline, signing at last the detested document with grave doubts and fears, dies shortly after of a broken heart. No one shall exceed Pascal as a zealot and a fanatic. His stormy vehemence of sacrifice shall include the sacrifice alike of philosophy and of himself.

Rarely, indeed, has there been such a zealot. The 'Pensées' remain as the chief witness of the fact. But there are other evidences beside. His sister had to expostulate

with him on his neglect of his ablutions and to remind him that godliness did not necessarily mean uncleanness. When he was dying he wanted to be carried to the Hospital of the Incurables to die among the poor. After he was dead, it was found that he carried an iron girdle with spikes which he was in the habit of pressing to his side when he felt anything which his sensitive mind could call a temptation. And mark the almost savage fanaticism towards the ordinary feelings of humanity. See how he speaks of comedy in the very age which saw the triumphs of Molière. "Tous les grands divertissemens sont dangereux pour la vie chrétienne; mais entre tous ceux que le monde a inventés, il n'y en a point qui soit plus à craindre que la comédie. C'est une représentation si naturelle et si délicate des passions, qu'elle les émeut et les fait naître dans notre cœur, et surtout celle de l'amour." How far we seem to be from Aristotle's appreciation of tragedy! how far, indeed, from Pascal's own discourse on love! But worse remains. He tells his married sister, Gilberte Périer, that she ought not to caress her own children or suffer them to caress her. When the question was raised of marrying one of his nieces, he even ventures to say that "the married state is no better than paganism in the eyes of God; to contrive this poor child's marriage is a kind of homicide, nay, Deicide, in her person." He will try even to exclude all human affection. "Le vrai et unique vertu," he cries, "est donc de se haïr. Il est injuste qu'on s'attache à moi, quoi-qu'on le fasse avec plaisir et volontairement. Je tromperois ceux à qui j'en



ferois naître le désir; car je ne suis la fin de personne, et n'ai pas de quoi les satisfaire."

Yet the great heart of humanity is greater than that of Pascal; and, despite his disavowal, it can find in him something to love. Vigour, enthusiasm, devotion, such qualities we can admire; but there is enough in him of the common warmth of human feeling even to win our tears. Madame Périer tells us that as he was returning one day from mass at St. Sulpice, he was met by a young girl about fifteen years of age and very beautiful, who asked an alms. He was touched to see the girl exposed to such obvious danger, and asked her who she was. Having learnt that her father was dead and that her mother had been taken to the Hôtel Dieu that very day, he thought that God had sent her to him as soon as she was in want; so without delay he took her to the seminary and put her into the hands of a good priest, to whom he gave money, and whom he begged to take care of her and to place her in some situation where, on account of her youth, she might have good advice and be safe. And to assist him in his care, he said that he would send next day a woman to buy clothes for her, and all that might be necessary to enable her to go to service. The ecclesiastic wished to know the name of him who was doing this charitable act: "for," said he, "I think it is so noble that I cannot suffer it to remain in obscurity." Such an act is worth a good many 'Pensées.'

## JACQUELINE PASCAL.

THE seventeenth century in France, which was at least as conspicuous in its religious as in its social and literary history, possessed almost as many remarkable women as men. In two great families, the members of which devoted themselves to the cause of religion as it was understood by Port Royal, the family of the Arnaulds and the family of the Pascals, it is a question whether the female representatives did not even outshine the male in intrepidity, in self-sacrifice, and in their masterful influence over others. Antoine Arnauld has a great name, but la Mère Angélique perhaps a greater in the annals of Port Royal. Agnès Arnauld has in some respects a stronger character than Le Maître. And though the world has agreed only to think of Blaise Pascal in connection with the family to which he belonged, there are some historians to whom the elder sister, Gilberte, and the younger sister, Jacqueline, appeal with more persuasive force, the one for her gentle loveliness as mother and head of the family, and the second for her strength, her self-control, and the simple consistency of her life. Jacqueline is indeed almost an

ideal figure. Born with undeniable literary genius, which time and circumstances did not permit her to cultivate, she early made sacrifice of her beauty, her social grace, and her intellectual power by entering a conventual life at the age of twenty-six. Ten years afterwards she died of a broken heart, because she had set her signature to a document which her superiors had forced on her, but which her inmost conscience did not accept as true. Simple enough is the outline of her life's history; but full of a certain pathetic charm which deepens into tragedy, as the bright, engaging child becomes the passionately devoted nun, and then is swept along the current in the internecine conflict between Jansenist and Jesuit. "*Il ne faut pas croire, comme dit un grand Saint, que le soleil ne luise que dans votre cellule,*" says Lancelot; and even those who, like Mr. Cotter Morison in a recent work,\* are shocked at the fatal issues of religious devotion, cannot but acknowledge that faith and obedience and self-sacrifice add somehow to the total value of life, and that it is better for the rest of humanity that such women as Jacqueline have been born.

Like her brother, Jacqueline Pascal showed early signs of genius. Born in 1625, we find her at the age of eleven writing a comedy with the daughters of Madame Saintot, in which the children themselves acted to a wondering audience of friends. Then her early precocity in verse-making brings her even into the presence of royalty. In 1638 she is presented to the queen, to whom she recites

\* See succeeding essay.

a sonnet composed by herself, and when some of the ladies of the court showed a natural scepticism as to her originality, she triumphantly produces two impromptu sets of verses,—one to Mademoiselle de Montpensier, and the other to Madame de Hautefort. Then once again her histrionic powers are brought into requisition, and she acts in Scudéry's 'Amour Tyrannique' together with other children before Richelieu. The great minister is so much taken with the girl's simplicity of manner and her undoubted cleverness, that at her request he receives again into favour her father, Etienne Pascal, who had incurred his sovereign displeasure. Her last literary and artistic success is won at Rouen in 1640, when she gains the prize at a verse competition on the subject of the Immaculate Conception. On this occasion Corneille interested himself in her success, and composed for her a few lines of thanks to the President of the Court and the Judges who had awarded her the prize.

Throughout this period, in which there was doubtless enough to turn the head of any ordinary girl, Jacqueline preserved her childish simplicity. She amused herself principally with her dolls, and her elder sister, Gilberte, notes the fact in her short biography of Jacqueline. "She received the prize (at Rouen) with admirable indifference; she was even so simple that, although she was fifteen years of age, she had always her dolls about her, which she dressed and undressed with as much pleasure as if she had been only ten. Indeed, we reproached her with her childishness, so that she was obliged to give it up, though



it cost her some distress, for she loved this amusement of dolls more than the greatest social entertainments of the town, at which she received so much applause. Fame and popularity were alike indifferent to her; indeed, I have never seen any one less impressed by them." But if we turn to the compositions of this period, we must make some allowance for the partiality of her critics and biographers. The sonnet to the queen is a somewhat frigid piece of formal compliment, and a subsequent epigram narrates how "the invincible son of an invincible father," even though he is yet in his mother's womb, is more valiant than Mars, and makes all the enemies of France tremble.

"Cet invincible enfant d'un invincible père  
 Déjà nous fait tout espérer :  
 Et quoiqu'il soit encore au ventre de sa mère,  
 Il se fait craindre et désirer.  
 Il sera plus vaillant que le dieu de la guerre,  
 Puisqu' avant que son œil ait vu le firmament,  
 S'il remue un peu seulement,  
 C'est à nos ennemis un tremblement de terre." \*

Jacqueline, however, was only thirteen when she wrote this. Here is an ode in a lighter vein, written at the same age, which appears less formal than the complimentary epigram.

STANCES FAITES SUR-LE-CHAMP.

*Juillet 1638.*

"Un jour, dans le profond d'un bois,  
 Je fus surprise d'une voix :  
 C'étoit la bergère Sylvie  
 Qui parloit à son cher amant,  
 Et lui dit pour tout compliment :  
 Je vous aime bien plus, sans doute, que ma vie.

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\* Cousin's 'Jacqueline Pascal,' p. 84.

" Lors j'entendis ce bel amant  
 Lui répondre amoureusement :  
 De plaisir mon âme est ravie ;  
 Je me meurs, viens à mon secours,  
 Et pour me guérir dis toujours :  
 Je vous aime bien plus, sans doute, que ma vie.

" Vivez, ô bienheureux amants,  
 Dans ces parfaits contentements.  
 Malgré la rage de l'envie ;  
 Et que ce mutuel discours  
 Soit ordinaire à vos amours :  
 Je vous aime bien plus, sans doute, que la vie." \*

Her verses which gained the prize at Rouen are hardly worth quoting in full. They were probably composed under the guidance, certainly at the suggestion, of Corneille ; and they bear a strong resemblance to the poem with which the poet won the prize in 1633. Just as his composition draws out a parallel between Eve and Mary, so the poem of Jacqueline contrasts and compares Mary with the ark of the covenant. The immaculate character of the conception is then proved as follows,—

" Si donc une arche simple et bien moins nécessaire  
 Ne sauroit habiter dans un profane lieu,  
 Comment penserez-vous que cette sainte mère,  
 Etant un temple impur, fût le temple de Dieu ? "

But now the time was come when all literary interests were to be sacrificed on the altar of religion. In 1646 the family of the Pascals fell under the influence of two gentlemen who were learned in the writings of the Jansenists, and from that time Jacqueline knows no other tasks but those imposed on her by the leaders of the monastery of

\* Cousin 'Jacq. Pascal,' p. 87.

Port Royal. Blaise Pascal was at the same time 'converted'; but whereas he fell away again and at Paris incurred some well-deserved suspicion of worldliness, so that a second conversion became necessary, his sister Jacqueline, when once she had submitted herself to la Mère Angélique and Singlin, never wavered in the path of devotion. Some years indeed elapsed before she took the veil, but that was not her fault; it was due to the resistance, first, of her father, and then of her brother. Her father, very naturally, did not wish to be deprived of her bright and winning companionship, and now that the older sister Gilberte was married to M. Périer, begged her to defer all thoughts of entering Port Royal until he died. She consented with reluctance, and kept up a *sécret* correspondence with the directors of the monastery. Then, more and more, the ascendancy of Port Royal was established in her mind. She asked Mother Agnès whether she might continue to write poetry, and received the stern reply, "C'est un talent dont Dieu ne vous demandera point compte: il faut l'ensevelir;" God will not require an account of your poetic talents: you must bury them. Her whole manner of life was changed. She lived almost entirely in her own room, without a fire; she practised abstinence from food and other forms of self-mortification; she occupied herself with good works amongst the poor, and spent half the night in study and prayer. Her relations only saw her at meal-time, and knew very little how her time was passed. "Her night-watches," says Madame Périer, "were extraordinary, and though we never knew for

certain, we guessed how long they were, by the amount of candles she burnt and other similar evidences."

There could be only one issue to such a life, and that her friends began to realize. Her father gradually came to see that his daughter desired to withdraw herself entirely from the world, and made her a promise that he would entertain no projects for her marriage. He died, however, in 1651, and the only obstacle to her intentions was apparently removed, when her brother suddenly took alarm and made strong representations to induce her to live with him. Thereupon she wrote a letter to him, full of grave dignity and resolution, in which, despite the tender expressions, it was easy to see that her mind was made up. The letter is so good an example of her literary power that some sentences in it may be here reproduced. She needs, she tells him, her brother's consent in order that she may take the vows with peace and joy.

"It is for this reason that I address myself to you, as in some sort the master of my future fate, and I say to you, Do not take away from me that which you cannot give. For albeit that God made use of you to procure for me progress in the first movements of His grace, you know well that from Him alone proceed all your love for, and your joy in, what is good; and that thus you are quite able to disturb my joy, but not to restore it to me, if once I lose it by your fault. You ought to know and, to some extent, to feel my tenderness by your own; and to be able to judge whether I am strong enough to bear the trial of the grief which I shall suffer. Do not reduce me to the necessity of either putting off what I have so long and so ardently desired, and thus exposing myself to the chance of losing my vocation; or else of doing poorly and with a languor, which would partake of ingratitude, an action which ought to be all fervour and joy and charity. Do not oblige me to regard you as the obstacle of my happiness, if you succeed in putting off the execution of my



design, or else as the author of my calamities, if I accomplish it languidly and reluctantly." \*

Blaise Pascal withdrew his opposition, though in somewhat sullen fashion, and raised fresh difficulties about Jacqueline's dowry, which were only got over by the unselfishness of Singlin and Angélique. In the name of Port Royal they agreed to receive the girl without any dowry at all, and in 1653 Jacqueline formally took the veil. It must be remembered throughout this incident that Blaise had not yet felt any leanings towards the life of Port Royal; and that his position in Paris probably entailed upon him a considerable expenditure, towards which his sister's share of property would have been a welcome contribution.

The change in Blaise Pascal came two years later, in 1654. His biographers relate how he was miraculously preserved from destruction in a carriage accident on the Pont de Neuilly, and how he passed through a night of marvel and ecstasy on November 23rd between the hours of half-past ten and twelve. But Jacqueline's letters for some time previously show how earnestly she longed and prayed for her brother's conversion. "I implore you," she says in a letter to her brother-in-law, M. Périer, "to pray that God may deign to make use of this affliction (Gilberte's illness) to restore my brother to his senses and to open his eyes to the vanity of all worldly things." The nature of Pascal's worldliness remains a mystery: but to his sister at all events he was in the outer court of the Gentiles. She speaks of the 'horribles attaches' which

\* Cousin, 'Jacqueline Pascal,' p. 167.

he must have had to enable him to resist the movements of God's grace; and tells him that he ought for some time to be "importuné de la senteur du boubier que vous aviez embrassé avec tant d'empressement." Her joy, therefore, was proportionately great when he showed signs of repentance. In a hurried letter to her sister she says,—

"All that I can tell you at present is that, through the mercy of God, he has a great desire to give himself up to Him. Although he feels in worse health than he has felt for a long time, he is not thereby deterred from carrying out his plans, which proves that his former reasons were nothing but pretexts. I remark in him a humility and a submissiveness, even towards me, which astonishes me, and, in fine, I have nothing further to tell you beside the fact that it is obviously not his natural spirit which acts in him." \*

Certainly Jacqueline had not been recently accustomed to find her brother either humble or submissive; she had rather had occasion to remark on that 'humeur bouillante' which with admirable truth she imputes to him, and which explains so much in him that is petulant and capricious.

Four years after her entry into Port Royal occurred the celebrated miracle of the Holy Thorn, which forms such a curiously well-authenticated marvel. Marguerite Périer, daughter of Gilberte, and niece of Jacqueline Pascal, had been suffering for three years and a half from what is known as lachrymal fistula, a large swelling in the corner of the eye, which was not only very painful in itself, but from its foetid odour caused the separation of the child from her companions. At a certain festival the eye was

\* *Ibid.* p. 242.

touched by a precious relic, a thorn from Christ's crown, and in a very short time afterwards the swelling disappeared, and the child was perfectly cured. The nuns of the community of Port Royal were by no means anxious that the wonder should get abroad for fear of their persistent enemies, the Jesuits; while, on the other hand, it was clearly the interest of those who hated the monastery to minimize the importance of the cure. But the miracle could not be hid, and it became the talk of Paris and of France. It is supposed that Hume wrote his well-known 'Essay on Miracles' in connection with this and other wonders which were subsequently bruited abroad among the persecuted Jansenists. Very likely the cure may be explained on natural grounds; for a sudden pressure on the diseased part, conjoined with considerable excitement in the mind of the patient, might have the same effect as the cautery which the physician, M. d'Alençai, had determined to try. But it could hardly be supposed that either Pascal or his sister would accept this interpretation of the incident. To Pascal it seemed a veritable sign of God's interference on behalf of the Port Royalists, and a triumphant vindication of their position as against their adversaries, of which he determined to make use in the controversial work which is known as the 'Pensées.' To Jacqueline it was the occasion of a new outburst of the old poetic ardour, and though Port Royal might condemn such gifts when exercised on worldly matters, they were more indulgent to their use in publishing their own triumph. Accordingly

Jacqueline produced a set of stanzas on the subject of the miracle, which M. Cousin thinks are equal to the 'Imitation' of Corneille. The verses are very unequal in merit, but they commence in a lofty strain, well worthy of Jacqueline's youthful promise.

" Invisible soutien de l'esprit languissant,  
 Secret consolateur de l'âme qui t'honore,  
 Espoir de l'affligé, juge de l'innocent,  
 Dieu caché sous ce voile où l'Eglise t'adore,  
 Jésus, de ton autel jette les yeux sur moi ;  
 Fais-en sortir ce feu qui change tout en soi ;  
 Qu'il vienne heureusement s'allumer dans mon âme,  
 Afin que cet esprit, qui forma l'univers,  
 Montre, en rejaillissant de mon cœur dans mes vers,  
 Qu'il donne encore aux siens une langue de flamme ! " \*

But the high tone of exultation was soon to be changed into one of doubt and sorrow. "La Sœur de Sainte-Euphémie," as she was named in the monastery, was called upon with the other nuns to sign the formulary, imposed on all religious bodies by the authority of the pope and the good pleasure of the king. This formulary was a document expressly framed against Port Royal by the Jesuits, and contained an indictment of certain propositions, said to be found in Jansen's 'Augustinus,' which was the sacred book of Port Royal. Notwithstanding the obvious intentions of the Jesuits, it was deemed advisable by some of the guiding spirits of the monastery, notably by Arnauld and Nicole, to affix their signatures with some reservations, more apparent than real. Such a course of action could not commend itself to the clear intelligence of Pascal,

\* Cousin, 'Jacq. Pascal,' p. 283.



who fainted away when he found that the cause so dear to him was being deserted by its champions. Nor yet did Jacqueline fail to see clearly the issues that were involved. As a last testimony to her faith she poured out her whole soul in a letter which she sent to Arnauld. The sentences still have in them the very traces of her tears.

“I can no longer hide the grief which pierces to the very bottom of my heart when I see the only persons, to whom it seemed that God had intrusted His truth, so faithless, if I may venture to say so, as not to dare to incur suffering, even if death were the penalty for a noble confession. I know the respect which is due to the first powers of the Church ; I would die to preserve it inviolate with as good a heart as I am ready to die, God helping me, for the confession of my faith, in the present crisis ; but I see nothing easier than to unite the two. What hinders every Churchman who knows the truth from answering, when the formulary is offered for his signature, ‘I know the reverence which I owe to the bishops, but my conscience does not permit me to testify by my signature that a thing is in a book, where I have not seen it’? After that he can wait in patience for whatever may happen. What are we afraid of? Banishment for the seculars, dispersion for the nuns, the seizure of our goods, prison, and death, if you will ! But is not all this our glory, and ought it not to be our joy ? Let us either renounce the Gospel, or let us follow the precepts of the Gospel and reckon ourselves happy to suffer somewhat for justice’ sake.

“But perhaps they will cut us off from the Church ? But who does not know that no one can be cut off against his own will, and that since the spirit of Jesus Christ is the only bond which unites His members to Himself and to one another, we can be deprived of the outward signs, but never of the effects of that union, so long as we preserve charity, without which no one is a living member of His holy body ? . . .

“I know well that men say that it is not for women to defend the truth ; although they might say that since, by a sad conjuncture and the confusion of the times in which we live, bishops have but the courage of women, women ought to have the courage of bishops. But if it is not our part to defend the truth, it is at least ours to die for the truth. . . . Let us pray God to

humiliate and to strengthen us, for humility without strength, and strength without humility are equally hurtful. Now more than ever is the time to remind ourselves that the timid are ranked with perjurers and sinners. If they are content with our position, well and good; for myself, if the matter depends on me, I will never do anything more. For the rest, let come what will—prison, death, dispersion, poverty; all this seems to me but nothing in comparison with the anguish in which I should pass the remainder of my days, if I had been so unhappy as to make terms with death, when there was so noble an opportunity of rendering to God the vows of fidelity which my lips have uttered." \*

The authority, however, of Arnauld was too great for her, and the formulary was signed. But though Jacqueline's signature was given, owing to that spirit of obedience which was one of her strongest characteristics, it was written with her heart's blood. A few months after she died, in October 1661, of a broken heart at the age of thirty-six.

Was such a life wasted? The question will probably be answered differently, according to our predilections and our sympathies. To some it will appear that talents, which would at least have made their possessor shine in literary society, if not win for herself a permanent niche in the temple of fame, were ignobly thrown away by being brought under the chilling austerities of the Church. To Mr. Cotter Morison her life seems to prove that Christianity has no consolatory force; † but there he is clearly wrong. Her letters are constantly full of the joy which she finds in believing. Whatever others might say, Jacqueline herself thought that she had chosen the better

\* Cousin, 'Jacq. Pascal,' pp. 320-7.

† Cf. p. 231 et foll. in the following article.

part, which could never be taken away from her. And indeed to some extent she was right. For the progress of the world has depended as much on the character and spirit of men, as on the results of their labours; and because sweet loveliness and gentle self-sacrificing obedience are an inestimable treasure, there are many who might echo the words of Pascal, when they told him that Jacqueline was dead. "God give us grace," he said, "to die as good a death:" "Dieu nous fasse la grâce d'aussi bien mourir!"

## THE SERVICE OF MAN, AND THE SERVICE OF CHRIST.\*

THAT the present sceptical age is a transitional one, and that scepticism is the bridge or stepping-stone which serves to connect a constructive era which is past with one which is only just dawning, are truths which have become by this time the moralizing commonplaces of journalism. It is, perhaps, a more interesting question whether we are not reaching the end of the sceptical period, and already discerning through the mists the lineaments of the new creed. If we are to believe the apostles of the new gospel, the constructive elements are furnished by science alone; for that which has disintegrated the past is the sole agent which can rear the edifice of the future. Already, so we are told, we can see the lines on which the structure is proceeding; so far as knowledge is concerned, we are to have the methods and disciplines of the sciences, while morality and society are to be moulded according to the

\* 1. 'The Service of Man.' By James Cotter Morison.

2. 'Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings.' By Henry Maudsley, M.D.



designs of M. Comte. Faith, religion, and worship may perhaps be neglected as unessential factors, or, if retained, they must be transformed into a religion of humanity, or possibly—if the founder of Positivism is to be believed—into a worship of woman. A social revolution is doubtless impending, and it may be more than one; but that is the fault of those who cling to the ancient methods, and who essay the vain task of pouring the new wine into old bottles. Meanwhile the age has still many of the features of traditional periods in its doubts, its inconsistencies, and its irreconcilable faiths and practices. It certainly would not be difficult to point out essential contradictions in the contemporary age. That the century should be at once highly credulous and highly sceptical; that Positivism should co-exist with spiritualistic *séances*; that a recrudescence of so-called Buddhism should accompany the cultivation of the exact sciences; and that palmistry and the Psychical Society should flourish alongside of doctrines of evolution,—these facts are assuredly a remarkable testimony to the Hegelian doctrine of the reconciliation of Opposites. Does not Mr. Cotter Morison himself show that he is not untainted by the vice of the age, when he admires the saints, but decries the ages of faith, and when he criticizes the logic and history of religion by means of methods the reverse of logical and a criticism which is largely unhistorical?

The two books which form the subject of this article are eminently characteristic of our time. Though the treatment in each case is absolutely dissimilar, the result

aimed at is the same, the limitation of knowledge and faith to the religion of the phenomenal and the contingent. While the 'Service of Man' attacks Christianity from the point of view of Positivism, the work of Dr. Maudsley attacks the belief in the supernatural from the standpoint of mental pathology. How is the belief in the supernatural to be explained? It can be reduced to the three following causes:—1. The natural defects and errors of human observation and reasoning. 2. The prolific activity of the imagination. 3. The diseases of mind as shown in hallucinations, mania, and ecstasy. Naturally, as might be expected from an accomplished practitioner in cases of mental disease, great stress is laid on the third set of causes. But we must protest at the outset against any treatment of such a subject which tends to substitute pathology for psychology. The attempt to explain sanity by insanity is on a par with the curious fallacy of trying to explain reason by means of instinct, man's nature by means of the animal nature, consciousness by means of unconscious states. We know a great deal more what we are than what animals may or may not be, just as we can only throw light on instinctive movements by our knowledge of reasoned and voluntary movements. It is the better known which throws light on the less known, and not *vice versâ*. Dr. Maudsley himself suggests a curiously instructive moral to his whole inquiry. For it appears that such 'illusions' as breed the belief in the supernatural are somehow part and parcel of that evolutionary *nisus* which carries on the tale of human develop

ment. It follows, then, that the process of disillusion is the beginning of decay, and that books like that of Dr. Maudsley are a sign that our evolutionary *nisus* is over. Such, we are told, is possibly "the transcendent irony of fate that the complete accomplishment of disillusion shall be the close of development and the beginning of degeneration." \* Judged, however, as literary works, there can be no question that by far the more important of the two books is the 'Service of Man.' Mr. Morison has a literary style of much merit, and a power of grave and sustained eloquence; Dr. Maudsley appears to us to possess neither the one quality nor the other.

The 'Service of Man' has been declared to be one of the most powerful attacks which have ever been published on the Christian religion. It has been received on bended knees, as a new evangel, by a critic who is so far justified in her attitude since Mr. Morison has accepted her as a competent authority in historical matters. To others, on the contrary, it appears to fall so far short of a damaging onslaught as to fail even in being a valuable work. It is easy, indeed, to imagine a far more effective criticism on the Christian religion made on Positivist lines. The metaphysical structure on which many of the Christian dogmas rest might be subjected to a more searching inquiry; but Mr. Morison's philosophy is hardly his strong point. Or fault might be found with modern Christianity in relation to some of the higher moral ideas. For instance, it might be plausibly objected against Christian teachers that they

\* 'Natural Causes,' &c., p. 367.

have never strenuously preached against war. Dr. Mozley, if we remember right, has published a sermon in which he defends war, not as of historical value, but as of an absolute ethical value. Wordsworth himself, despite his lofty spiritualistic creed, is not immaculate in this respect, and has ventured to put his name to these stupendous lines:—

“God’s most perfect instrument  
In working out a pure intent  
Is man arrayed for mutual slaughter;  
Yea, Carnage is God’s daughter.”

It would be difficult to imagine anything more shocking and more immoral than this. Or, again, it might be urged that Christian teachers have never taken up the cause of the animal world, and have been in this respect below the level of the highest thought of the age. When have we heard from the pulpit what we have certainly read in the magazines—a protest against fashionable sport? This is perhaps the more curious because many clergymen have espoused the cause of anti-vivisection, presumably because they hate science more than they love animals. Vivisection might perhaps be defended even on moral grounds; but how can morality palliate pheasant battues? But Mr. Morison will not go on obvious issues. He prefers the pyrotechnic method of paradox to the steady beacon-lights of reason. He will dazzle and startle, even though he fails to convince. Were there ever more paradoxical theses maintained in any serious argument than the assertions that Christianity has been little or no consolation to men’s minds, and that it has been on the whole rather



prejudicial than beneficial to morality? Let us, however, put Mr. Morison's arguments in his own words, as he summarizes them on p. 241.

"The results of the previous inquiry would seem to be as follows:—

1. That a widespread tendency exists in this, and still more in other countries, to give up a belief in Christianity; and that the scepticism of the present day is very far more serious and scientific than was the deism of the last century.

2. That the supposed consolations of Christianity have been much exaggerated; and that it may be questioned whether that religion does not often produce as much anxiety and mental distress as it does of joy, gladness, and content.

3. That by the great doctrine of forgiveness of sins consequent on repentance, even in the last moment of life, Christianity often favours spirituality and salvation at the expense of morals.

4. That the morality of the Ages of Faith was very low; and that the further we go back into times when belief was strongest, the worse it is found to be.

5. That Christianity has a very limited influence on the world at large, but a most powerful effect on certain high-toned natures, who, by becoming true saints, produce an immense impression on public opinion, and give that religion much of the honour which it enjoys.

6. That although the self-devotion of saints is not only beyond question, but supremely beautiful and attractive,

yet, as a means of relieving human suffering and serving man in the widest sense, it is not to be compared for efficiency with science."

We are not immediately concerned with the first point, that being a question which affects the professed defenders of Christianity; although there are certain considerations, such as the exact meaning of Christian faith, which may have to be estimated. The other arguments move on the wider ground of logical and historical criticism, which is common to all intelligence.

Is Christianity a consolation or the reverse? According to Mr. Morison it cannot be called consolatory. The proof is furnished by certain extracts which he quotes from the outpourings of sensitive hearts like Jacqueline Pascal, or the fanatical antinomianism of Scotch Calvinists. In one sense the question itself is absurd; in another it is impossible to answer. For Christianity, like every religion, has strongly emotional elements, and when we deal with the sphere and range of emotional feelings and experiences, it is impossible to form a comparative estimate of pleasures and pains. Is the poetic nature a happy one? Is imagination a blessing or a curse to men? Is it happier to be apathetic or sensitive? Who can say? But a practical verdict can be gained on these matters by the discovery that no man would willingly relinquish his higher emotional capacities, however painful may be their exercise or their consequences. And if religious feelings have the same emotional ardour, they too involve the same alternations of joy and woe. But, further, it is obvious

that we cannot take emotional language as a strictly scientific expression of the facts, there being no logical equivalent for the elevations and depressions of the heart. Who is not aware of a sort of conscious hyperbole in the manner in which he speaks of his own moods? Who, with the exception of Mr. Morison, feels any difficulty in understanding Paul's references to himself as the greatest of all sinners?

Mr. Morison's examples are not wholly fair or unexceptionable. He quotes, for instance, from Bunyan's 'Grace abounding to the Chief of Sinners,' a passage which refers to a period *before* the author had been, in the language of theology, 'converted.' Bunyan is detailing not his tribulations as a Christian, but the considerations which led him to throw himself upon the grace of God in order to become one. And Jacqueline Pascal is not a good instance to select of the 'mental distress' which faith can cause. In the very narrative of Madame P  rier, from which Mr. Morison quotes her determination to join the Port Royal communion, it appears that when the resolution was once made it was not she, but her sister and her brother who were full of distress.

"On the eve of that day she begged me to speak about it to my brother, to avoid taking him by surprise. . . . He was much touched, and retired very sad to his room without seeing my sister. . . . I could not sleep. At seven the next morning, as I saw that Jacqueline did not rise, I thought that she also had not slept, but I found her fast asleep. The noise I made awakened her, and she asked me the time. I told her, and inquired how she felt, and if she had slept well. She replied she was well, and had had a good night. Then she arose, dressed herself, and went away; doing this, as all things, with

a tranquillity and composure of soul which cannot be conceived (faisant cette action, comme toutes les autres, dans une tranquillité et une égalité d'âme inconcevables)." \*

Numerous passages could be quoted from Jacqueline's memoirs which bear quite a different signification from that which Mr. Morison would impute to her religious mind. In 1638 she caught the small-pox, which spoils her beauty. This is how she speaks of it in a poem:—

"Oh que mon cœur se sent heureux  
Quand au miroir je vois les creux  
Et les marques de ma vérole !  
Je les prends pour sacrés témoins,  
Suivant votre sainte parole,  
Que je ne suis de ceux que vous aimez le moins.

"Je les prends, dis-je, ô souverain !  
Pour un cachet dont votre main  
Voulut marquer mon innocence ;  
Et cette consolation  
Me fait avoir le connaissance  
Qu'il ne faut s'affliger de cette affliction." †

Would the 'Service of Man' have enabled a young and beautiful girl to be thus consoled? Or, again, observe the manner in which she strengthens and confirms a young aspirant to the religious life.

"Je loue Dieu, ma chère demoiselle, de la persévérance qu'il vous donne ; car *je sais par expérience qu'il n'y a point de plus grand bonheur en la terre que celui où vous aspirez*, et j'espère que vous croirez cette vérité si Dieu vous fait jamais la grâce d'en goûter."

This does not look as if she had found Christianity a

\* 'Service of Man,' pp. 68, 69 ; Cousin, 'Jacqueline Pascal,' pp. 74, 75.

† Cousin, 'Jacqueline Pascal,' pp. 91, 92.



broken reed, any more than the following passage from the same letter :—

“Mais ne craignez point; car saint Benoît nous assure qu’encore que la voie étroite paraisse difficile à l’entrée, *l’amour de Dieu l’adoucit bientôt* et la rend si spacieuse, qu’au lieu que d’abord à peine peut-on y entrer, on vient ensuite à y courir avec une facilité sans aucune comparaison plus grande que dans la voie large du siècle, parceque Dieu nous soutient et nous porte dans sa voie, au lieu que dans l’autre sa main toute-puissante s’appesantit toujours sur nous de plus en plus.” \*

And as Mr. Morison seems fond of quoting from the seventeenth century, let us add the following passage from a letter which M. Singlin, one of the chief spiritual directors of Port Royal, wrote in 1661 :—

“For several days I have been struck with a thought: it is that of our impertinence in desiring one thing, fearing another, wishing something would happen or not happen, just as if the sovereign wisdom and justice did not see all things alike, and as if we could contribute valuable suggestions to the rule of perfect justice! We have but to say that His holy will be done in all things, to consult Him in order to know it, to submit ourselves to all events, only fearing to intrude our will on His.”

Surely the Christian religion had some consolatory power for M. Singlin!

In dealing with the relation between Christianity and morality, as discussed by Mr. Morison, there are several points to be distinguished. Mr. Morison takes us back to the ages of faith, and quotes—we will not say with relish, but at all events with unnecessary profusion—instance after instance of Christians living immoral lives and doing immoral acts. It is not quite clear what is the exact con-

\* Cousin, ‘Jacqueline Pascal,’ pp. 294-96.

clusion we are expected to draw. If the contention be that Christianity has been prejudicial to morality, then it must be proved that there is some causal relation between embracing the Christian creed and doing immoral acts. But this is, of course, absurd; at all events, it could hardly be said that Mr. Morison has proved it. It remains, then, to affirm that immorality has co-existed with Christianity, —a fact which would probably be at once conceded—just as immorality has co-existed with free trade, with the emancipation of the negro, with the Education Acts, with the extension of the suffrage, nay, even with the promulgation of the doctrines of Positivism. But it is perhaps urged that we can, at all events, apply the method of ‘concomitant variations,’ and that if we find that the more Christian the age the greater is the number of immoral clergymen, we can draw the conclusion which Mr. Morison desires. To this, however, there is a twofold answer. In the first place, the assumption is that the so-called ages of faith represent a purer stage of Christianity, and this is an assumption which would only be made by extreme upholders of ecclesiastical pretensions. To many minds the view that Christianity may develop without ceasing to be divine, and that therefore we might antecedently expect a correspondence between the characteristics of the age and the quality of Christian faith and practice, is one which is not only true in itself, but serves to explain the phenomena on which Mr. Morison dilates. In the second place, Mr. Morison is surely enough of a logician to know that no argument at all can be founded on an enumeration of

immoral clerics, unless we know what proportion the immoral clerics bear to the moral ones and to the total number of professedly Christian teachers. To say, for instance, that France furnishes more suicides than Belgium, is valueless, from a moral point of view, without consideration of the relative population of each country. To say, because more murders are committed in modern England than in the preceding ages, that therefore modern England is more immoral than she used to be, is to forget that we must take into account the proportion of the murderers to the general population. All arguments touching the moral condition of an age or a people, which are founded on statistics, are especially dangerous, because statistics cannot show the crimes which were committed and never found out, nor the crimes which were meditated and never carried into practice. Such considerations are, of course, truisms; but it is necessary to lay stress on them when we are brought face to face with a long and disgusting catalogue of clerical offences, and are asked to condemn Christianity on this ground. What sane man would conclude from George Eliot's well-known story in 'Scenes of Clerical Life,' that, because the clerical hero had once committed adultery, therefore religion had been in his case prejudicial to his morality? And what professed theologian would venture to assert that Christianity in all cases expels the passions?

We come, however, to a more serious count in Mr. Morison's indictment. Christianity, it appears, has given but a lukewarm support to morality, nay, has even largely

thwarted the growth of moral ideas by certain dogmas of its own which are found to be inconsistent with a properly ethical culture. It may safely be presumed that here we touch on the vital point of Mr. Morison's argument. It may or may not be the case that Christianity includes a large proportion of immoral characters within its fold; still it can hardly be proved that it exerts an influence prejudicial to the interests of society, unless it is shown that by virtue of certain essential characteristics it does and must damage and weaken morality at large. Here Mr. Morison's arguments seem to be three in number. Christianity holds up too exalted an ideal before men's eyes, and therefore weakens their efforts by the discouragement it entails. Christianity exaggerates the importance of 'conversion,' and correspondingly depreciates the value of a moral life. And, finally, Christianity, magnifying spirituality at the expense of righteousness, can never be as useful to the world as Science. The first is a curious criticism; indeed it might, from a different point of view, be mistaken for a compliment. For if Mr. Morison is going to limit men's efforts to what is practicable, he runs counter to the experience of many wise men in the past, and nullifies much of the teaching of history. "Man rises," it has been finely said, "by what he cannot surmount." Is it or is it not the fact that a high ideal in every line of life improves men's practice? Is it not especially the case in morality that sublimity of aim is found to be the very nerve and sinew of all effort? If not, then it is difficult to explain the value of ambition;



it becomes necessary to alter our educational methods; and it is impossible to explain the course of evolution. To which may be added the consideration that few higher ideals can be propounded than the service of humanity, or any which is further removed from the narrow bounds of men's ordinary aspirations and daily lives. Humanity is indeed an ideal; and it is far more practicable for men to serve their class, or their family, or themselves. What an excuse for selfish isolation is furnished by the advice to work for what is practicable! And with what undeniable logic shall we all become hedonists! Perhaps, however, we do Mr. Morison an injustice by pressing this point, which he only seems to mention incidentally. The other points are the main matter, and require the more careful attention.

Mr. Morison quotes Paley to the effect that the primary object of the Gospel was not to preach morality; and, however strange an instance Paley may seem to be of characteristic theologians (being a theological utilitarian of an extremely narrow type), yet the intention of Mr. Morison is clear. He means to lay stress on the fact that the Church preaches repentance, conversion, reconciliation with God, rather than the necessity of good works throughout a lifetime. Or, if we put the matter in a rather different form, the doctrine of grace is declared to be antithetical to the notion of a morality dependent on habit and improvable by education. Or again, some doubts are thrown on the reality of such conditions as are indicated in the theological terms 'faith,' 'atonement,' and 'turning

to God.' But the general attitude of Mr. Morison in these matters is perhaps best summarized in the statement that morality, being a doctrine of the *effects* of actions, is thwarted by the Christian insistence on spirituality in *motive, temper, and character*. With regard to some of these points some immediate concessions must be made to Mr. Morison. No doubt, a one-sided doctrine of grace and faith is opposed to any theory which attaches a proper value to the habitual performance of good acts. No doubt, there is some absurdity in the position that a man of evil life can atone for all the immorality of the past by a single act of professed 'turning to God' on his death-bed. And when the theologian tells us that "apart from the grace of God there is no reason why the greatest saint should not become the greatest sinner," and *vice versâ*, the common consciousness of mankind revolts from the obvious extravagance of the words. That there is, however, a real and definite meaning to be attached to 'faith' and 'grace' and that 'conversion to God' corresponds to a movement of heart and mind which is not chimerical but rational, few thoughtful men would be prepared to deny. It is a point to which we shall return shortly. Meanwhile it is important to consider what kind and species of Christianity Mr. Morison is criticizing, and whether even theologians, usually considered extreme, would assent to Mr. Morison's expression of their views. Mr. Morison is of course aware that the old antithesis between 'faith' and 'works' is one which has been considerably fought over. He seems to be unaware that the most accredited mouthpieces of

Christianity have found it necessary to lay equal stress on both members of the antithesis. "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them." Such sentences from the Sermon on the Mount seem to dissipate many of Mr. Morison's assertions. According to Mr. Morison, Plato's *ὁμοίωσις τῷ Θεῷ* is by theologians used to the exclusion of ordinary moral duties. It is enough that a man should 'turn to God' to excuse him from the performance of good actions. Indeed, the making of God 'all in all' apparently excludes the reign of justice and brotherly kindness on earth. But is this the fact? Is it true that Christianity has ever taught such a monstrous doctrine? It is true that Christianity, bowing down before the awful name of God, has considered its Divinity to be the summary and compendium of all goodness and truth, but not that it has propounded its Divinity as the substitute for all goodness and truth. But, Mr. Morison might argue, you forget the Calvinists. Possibly an Antinomian sect of the Calvinists has taught something of the sort, or at all events this might be a deduction from some of their exaggerated predestinationism. Doubtless the Rev. Thomas Boston was such a narrow Scotch Calvinist; but are we forced to accept him as a representative Christian theologian? Let us turn to Calvin himself and see what he has to say on the matter. Does a man who turns to God exempt himself from the necessity of conforming to moral laws? No, says Calvin:—

“Præterea non sola vindictæ formidine se coercet a peccando, sed quia Deum loco patris amat et reveretur, loco domini observat et colit, *etiamsi nulli essent inferi*, solam tamen offensionem horret. En quid sit pura germanaque religio, nempe fides cum serio Dei timore conjuncta; ut timor et voluntariam reverentiam in se contineat, *et secum trahat legitimum cultum qualis in lege præscribitur.*” (Joan. Calvini Institut. lib. i. cap. ii. 2.)

Does a man by sacrificing his own will to God, thereby release himself from duty? Not according to Calvin:—

“Nam si tum illi demum exhibemus quam decet reverentiam, dum voluntatem ejus nostræ præferimus, *sequitur non alium esse legitimum ejus cultum quam justitiæ, sanctitatis, puritatis observationem.*” (*Ibid.* lib. ii. cap. viii. 2.)

Is the worship of God the worship of some arbitrary force, removed from the world in which we live, and is religion divorced from the teaching of experience, of nature, of science? Listen once again to Calvin:—

“Ad hæc quia ultimus beatæ finis in Dei cognitione positus est: ne cui præclusus esset ad felicitatem aditus, non solum hominum mentibus indidit illud quod diximus religionis semen, sed ita se patefacit in toto mundi opificio, ac se quotidie palam affert, ut aperire oculos nequeant quin aspicere eum cogantur.” (*Ibid.* lib. i. cap. v. 1.)

Perhaps Mr. Morison would be surprised to find how humane a theologian Calvin really is. Certainly the Rev. Thomas Boston would appear to be a very degenerate disciple of the man who is assumed to be his teacher. But, we may be told, God, according to the theologians, created man and the world for His own glory, and no other end of action is possible to God than the realization of His glory—an end which militates against the reasonable



service of humanity. Now, Jonathan Edwards, a celebrated Calvinistic philosopher, wrote a dissertation on this very point,—‘A Dissertation concerning the End for which God created the World,’—and the importance of the subject may perhaps excuse a somewhat long quotation :—

“Now God’s internal glory is either in His understanding or will. The glory of fulness of His understanding is His knowledge. The internal glory and fulness of God, having its special seat in His will, is His holiness and happiness. The whole of God’s internal good or glory is in these three things, viz. His infinite knowledge, His infinite virtue or holiness, and His infinite joy and happiness. Indeed, there are a great many attributes in God, according to our way of conceiving them : but all may be reduced to these ; or to their degree, circumstances, and relations. We have no conception of God’s power, different from the degree of these things, with a certain relation of them to effects. God’s infinity is not properly a distinct kind of good, but only expresses the degree of good there is in Him. So God’s eternity is not a distinct good, but is the duration of good. His immutability is still the same good, with a negation of change. So that, as I said, the fulness of the Godhead is the fulness of His understanding, consisting in His knowledge ; and the fulness of His will consisting in His virtue and happiness.

“And therefore the external glory of God consists in the communication of these. The communication of His knowledge is chiefly in giving the knowledge of Himself ; for this is the knowledge in which the fulness of God’s understanding chiefly consists.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Thus it is easy to conceive how God should seek the good of the creature, consisting in the creature’s knowledge and holiness, and even his happiness, from a supreme regard to Himself ; as his happiness arises from that which is an image and participation of God’s own beauty ; and consists in the creature’s exercising a supreme regard to God, and complaisance in Him ; in beholding God’s glory, in esteeming and loving it, and rejoicing in it, and in his exercising and testifying love and supreme respect to God, which is the same thing with the creature’s

exalting God as his chief good, and making Him his supreme end.

“And though the emanation of God’s fulness, intended in the creation, is to the creature as its object; and though the creature is the subject of the fulness communicated, which is the creature’s good; yet it does not necessarily follow that even in so doing God did not make Himself his end. It comes to the same thing. God’s respect to the creature’s good and His respect to Himself is not a divided respect; but both are united in one, as the happiness of the creature aimed at is happiness in union with Himself. The creature is no further happy with this happiness which God makes his ultimate end, than he becomes one with God. The more happiness, the greater union: when the happiness is perfect, the union is perfect. And as the happiness will be increasing to eternity, the union will become more and more strict and perfect; nearer and more like to that between God the Father and God the Son, who are so united that their interest is perfectly one. If the happiness of the creature be considered in the whole of the creature’s eternal duration, with all the infinity of its progress, and infinite increase of nearness and union to God; in this view, the creature must be looked upon as united to God in an infinite strictness. (*‘Dissertation,’ &c., chap. ii. sect. vii.*)

This extract may not contain very good metaphysics; but it is at all events very good morality, and is quite sufficient to disprove the assertion that the tendency even of an extreme school of Christian doctrine is to degrade the ordinary moral conceptions.

Is it not clear that what Mr. Morison is attacking is not Christianity, but Antinomianism? Every body of doctrine, every synthetic theory of life and knowledge, might be treated in the same way, and with equal unfairness. Shall we see how the case stands with M. Comte and Positivism itself? In the first place, we notice with pain that Positivism, despite its lofty teaching as to the necessity of fraternal love, has exhibited a melancholy story of jealousy,

quarrels and dissension. It has not prevented a serious division of Positivists into rival camps, each of which claims to contain and preach the pure milk of the word. In the second place, it may or may not promulgate an exalted moral code; but when we turn to the private life of its earliest teachers (where, if anywhere, we ought to find its influence at its purest and best) we find that one of its spiritual fathers, to whom Comte himself professes his obligations,\* the illustrious Saint-Simon, not only attempted his own life, but went through a curious course of experiences within and without the limits of the moral law, tried marriage and divorce, alternated asceticism with voluptuous revelry, and exhausted many of the dissipations of the gaming-table and the racecourse. So, too, M. Comte himself married, and then divorced, Caroline Massin, maligned his old friend M. Poinsoot, went through an *orage cérébral* at a private asylum, spat venom at the honoured name of Sir John Herschel because he dared to criticize him, formed a romantic attachment to the wife of a man sentenced to the galleys, and erected her, together with his mother and his cook, on a joint pedestal of fame as forming "a virtuous *ensemble* of three admirable feminine types." Not only so, but this contemner of the gods ventures to build for his divine Clotilde an altar in his room, at which to offer prayer; he makes a pilgrimage to her tomb each week, and dedicates to her a commemorative anniversary.† We pass from this sad picture of the

\* 'Œuvres choisies de C. H. de Saint-Simon,' xxxviii. 9.

† 'Politique Positive,' pref. pp. 12, 13. Cf. Martineau, 'Types of Ethical Theory,' i. 396.

regenerator of humanity to the system itself. Here we discover that, despite energetic attacks on the anthropomorphism of earlier religion, the explicit recommendation is given to systematic worship of actual men and women. We discover that the overthrow of the theological stages of human life and thought ends by instituting an organized priesthood, a breviary of services and *fêtes*, and even an appointed day for cursing in public all reactionary wrongdoers. We discover that, however earnest may be the denunciation of metaphysical abstractions, we are to accept in the sequel a metaphysical abstraction called 'Humanity.' Nay, we are to offer it worship, and thus apparently to offend against the first principle of Positivism by becoming victims of abstract ideas. We are to abolish the *Dieu suprême*, but to retain a *Grand Etre*. We are to cease to be "slaves of God" and we are to become "servants of humanity." And finally, despite the intellectual organization and classification of the sciences, our discipline must conclude by recognizing that the heart is to have the primacy over the head; and social progress itself must depend on natures in which the emotional impulses are most intense and generous, that is, women and the *prolétariat*.\* May we not conclude from all this, according to the lines of Mr. Morison's argument, that "the morality of the earliest age" of Positivism "was very low"; that "by the great doctrine" of the worship of humanity, Positivism "favours" metaphysical and theological abstractions "at the expense of science"; that by the example of M. Comte "it may be

\* 'Pol. Pos.' pref. 3, 4. 'Catéchisme Pos.' pref. xvii.



questioned whether the system does not produce "as much bitterness, envy, and selfishness, as it does altruism and fraternal affection; and finally, that Positivism "has a very limited influence on the world at large"? How unfair such a treatment of a great synthetic theory would be! How shallow would be thought the critic who should venture to rely only on such arguments as these to disprove the *Philosophie Positive*! But is the treatment less unfair, is the criticism less shallow, which accumulates certain extreme dogmas held possibly by antinomian sects, calls them by the name of Christianity, and then holds this poor thing of shreds and patches up to ridicule? Apparently Mr. Morison does not care to approach the writings of the evangelists. Apparently he has not heard of the "law of love," which is the first Christian commandment, and which makes all men members one of another. On idle ears has fallen the question: "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen?" Nor does the critic seem ever to have appreciated the divine moral: "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it not to Me."

Apart, however, from all misquotation or perversion of Christian doctrine, there is one underlying principle in Mr. Morison's criticism. When he attempts to draw a sharp antithesis between Christianity and morality, he means to set in essential contrast a theory which insists on the results of action with one which lays stress on motive, principle, and character. It is an old controversy in ethics

between systems which have been called 'intuitionist' and systems which are empirical and utilitarian; and the only novelty in Mr. Morison's treatment of the controversy is that he, by implication, seeks to deny to his opponents' doctrine the title of moral, on the ground that it is theological. When, for instance, the histories of Agnes Jones, Margaret Hallahan, and Dora Pattison are referred to as proving that science deals more effectively with suffering and disease than any Christian faith, the conclusion we are meant to draw is clearly that science, because it arrives at more successful results, is therefore more of a moral agent than the Christian faith, which only tries to improve men's characters. And in this matter Mr. Morison puts himself on a line with philosophers like Bentham, James Mill (though hardly J. S. Mill), and Mr. Herbert Spencer. If, indeed, ethics be a science dealing with human conduct, just in the same manner as biology deals with the conditions of organic vitality and physics deals with the laws and constitution of the natural world, then it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the good means the generally useful, the socially healthy, and the universally pleasant. But there are at least two considerations which make one pause. There is the awkward element of conscience, on which these empirical moralists have expended so much elaborate explanation, but which is ever reasserting its primary force and authority as the inexplicable surd of the empirical equation. For, whatever be its origin or its history, conscience, at all events, is the judge of character, motive, and principle, rather than of

the results or effects of action. And there is also that which follows conscience as its inevitable shadow, the sense of moral obligation violated, or that internal sanction of haunting remorse, which we mean when we speak of sin.

Is there, or is there not, such a thing as sin in the world? Or is it only the phantasmal exaggeration of error and mistake? For if sin be real, then also remorse is the awful sense of a duty transgressed, and responsibility is the consciousness that we live under the dominion of a moral law, the characters of which are written on the tables of the heart by the finger of God. It is the incomparable power which the Christian religion has of giving a new and transcendent vitality to these truths, which makes Mr. Morison so inconsistently admire Sister Dora and Mother Margaret, and which makes us feel that, of all intuitionist systems of morals, Christianity is essentially the strongest. Its task is, as we understand it, not indeed to ignore the results of action, which are patent enough to all who have eyes to see, but to transfer the judgment from the outer to the inner, to lift the veil of a man's outer self, and reveal the deep and abiding springs of his personality. What, indeed, is the Sermon on the Mount but one long exposition of the text that "God seeth the heart"? And how shall ethics preserve its paramount distinction among the disciplines and sciences of men, unless its chief problem be recognized to be, not so much the elucidation of 'the good,' towards which so many sciences make just and proper contributions, but rather the meaning of 'right'? Mr. Morison himself will not

blink the issue. For in his concluding pages he explicitly denies the fact of moral responsibility in any sense in which it is supposed to attach to all men impartially. Mr. Herbert Spencer has already in his 'Data of Ethics' declared that the sense of duty is transitory, and will disappear as fast as moralization advances. Now listen to Mr. Cotter Morison:—

*"The sooner the idea of moral responsibility is got rid of, the better it will be for society and moral education. The sooner it is perceived that bad men will be bad, do what we will—though, of course, they may be made less bad—the sooner shall we come to the conclusion that the welfare of society demands the suppression or elimination of bad men, and the careful cultivation of the good only. . . . What do we gain by this fine language as to moral responsibility? The right to blame, and so forth. Bad men are not touched by it. The bad man has no conscience: he acts after his malignant nature. . . . Nothing is gained by disguising the fact that there is no remedy for a bad heart, and no substitute for a good one."* \*

This is plain language, at all events, perhaps somewhat truculent and even repulsive, but written so clearly that he who runs may read. The following sentence is still more characteristic: "Remorse is the note of tender and passionate, *but ill-governed natures.*" † Ill-governed? Yes, for he who feels it knows that he has let his lower nature override his higher. But not, in Mr. Morison's sense, because conscience is a figment, and duty a name; for remorse is the cloud which testifies to the reality of the sun, the darkness which would not be felt, did not we know that there was light.

\* 'Service of Man,' pp. 293-5.

† *Ibid.* p. 302.



What, after all, is it that Mr. Morison is attacking? Is it Christianity, that is, a system of authoritative dogmas, formulated by councils, systematized and hardened during the Middle Ages, and lasting to the present day as a survival of a barbaric era? or is it Christ Himself, the incarnation of the religious principle, the example of a divine life? If the former is the object of the onslaught, then we may understand the critic's position to mean that a vast superstructure has been reared on the simple ground-plan traced by Christ and His apostles, which has been so little a fulfilment of the original design that it has effectually obscured and vitiated it. In that case, every effort to detach what is human and misleading, every attack on outlying buttress and offending bastion, but serves to bring out in purer outline the simple form of original and primitive Christianity. In that case, too, when Mr. Morison takes us back to the so-called "ages of faith," it would be better to take us back still further, not to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but to the first. But if this is not a true statement of Mr. Morison's position, and if the real objective is not Christianity, but Christ, then we open a far graver question. For now the point is whether religion itself is a necessity for man, whether the figure of Christ is not a travesty of man's highest nature, for which the modern age ought to substitute the economist and the enlightened politician.

Is religion a necessity or not? This is to some extent a question of ethics, to a still larger extent a question of mental philosophy. Metaphysical, undoubtedly, the

inquiry must be; it must depend on certain broad postulates and suppositions which Mr. Morison would hardly be prepared to grant. Mr. Morison does not often handle metaphysics in the 'Service of Man,' and when he does, the attempt is disastrous. Here is the way in which with light hand he destroys the philosophy of the late Professor Green.

"'Can the knowledge of nature,' asks Professor Green, 'be itself a part of nature, in that sense of nature in which it is said to be an object of knowledge?' It is not easy to see why the subject which cognizes the object should be less nature than the object cognized. The image of an object in the mirror which reflects is as much nature as the object reflected.'" \*

To which the answer is that the consciousness of which Professor Green is speaking is not regarded by him as a mirror. Mr. Morison must have read Green to very little purpose, if he thinks that the notion of a *passive* register of impressions suits the philosopher's idea of self. When a metaphysician says that the consciousness which makes us men makes us also independent of time and development, he is speaking of a mind which *actively* transforms its fleeting impressions into a concatenated body of knowledge. It is just because no intelligible theory of knowledge can be constructed on the supposition that the mind is a passive mirror, that Professor Green and those who think with him are strenuous in asserting the activity and independence of the consciousness. The human mind even as interpreted by Mr. Herbert Spencer is not merely a mirror. Biology asserts just as strongly as metaphysics

\* 'Service of Man,' p. 278.

that by means of inherited aptitudes and transmitted intelligence a man's mind does not passively reflect, but actively transforms, the impressions it receives. The further question remains whether the mind is, in its essential activity, *sui generis* and independent, or only a part of nature in the widest sense. Idealism asserts the first, and materialism the second.

"But," says Mr. Morison, "it is not necessary for the purpose in hand to make a flight into the fine æther of Kantian metaphysics." Yet, if we are arguing on the essential nature of the human intelligence, whether we like it or no, that is exactly what we must do. In dealing with the highest forms which the mind of man assumes, in asking ourselves if there is within the human capacity a determined effort to win the infinite—whether we seek to prove or disprove—in either case our arguments must be metaphysical. But within the limits of the present essay it is obviously impossible to do more than indicate the lines of such an inquiry.

When we seek to determine whether religion is a necessity or no, we must attempt to see how far the nature of knowledge on the one hand, and the nature of morality on the other, inevitably lead to some such culmination as that which religion suggests and satisfies. An analysis of knowledge reveals the truth that, except on the assumption of an active intelligence, we can neither understand nature nor ourselves. The understanding makes nature, says Kant. That the world arises in consciousness, is the admission even of Mr. G. H. Lewes. If thought, then, is

the one indispensable element, if nothing exists except to thought, and without consciousness there is no world, then it is equally clear that thought itself leads us from the finite to the infinite. Is this denied? Then how do we know ourselves to be finite, unless, in some real sense, we are also infinite? We cannot be conscious of limitations, if we could not somehow overpass the limitations. The man who has always been a slave knows not freedom; the animal who lives at the mercy of successive impressions knows neither regret nor heart-hunger. Even the consciousness that knowledge is relative, being dependent on an interaction between subject and object, just because it can hold equally both terms of the antithesis, must in itself be able to transcend and unite them. Thus from the finite and the relative, from the opposition between subject and object, we rise to the meeting-point between being and thinking—we rise, in other words, to the infinite, which is at once subject and object, the identity of being and thinking. And this, phrase it as we may, is God.

So too if we start from the side of morality. Here the essential antithesis and conflict is between will and desires, between a higher and a lower nature, between reason and the blind unthinking passions. The whole meaning of morality is the effort to overcome this opposition, to make life a harmony instead of a discord. And the problem here is, as it is also in the intellectual department, to give equal weight to both members of the antithesis, and finally to transcend them. We have, for instance, to see that the emotional elements in human nature receive



their due satisfaction, but at the same time we must seek to raise them. We have to elevate the partial and limited ends of the desires into universal ones, to rationalize the whole nature by bringing every part of it into direct relation with some central unity. On the one hand the will, on the other the desires, must be equally rationalized, unified, lifted into an atmosphere which is above the scene of their partial and endless conflicts. This morality *by itself* can never do; it can only be done by religion. Religion is the perfect solution of that problem, which morality only partially solves. For the effort of mind by which the human being "feels himself at one with God," and lifts himself into a sort of potential infinity, is already religion. Is such a mental effort denounced as vague and mystical? It is rather the essence and final term of the moral life. By whatever name known, whether as an act of faith, or grace, or self-surrender, it is that which the theologians mean when they speak of 'conversion.' He who has striven thus upwards is the spiritual character, the religious man. He at all events comprehends what to Mr. Morison is too hard a saying. It becomes not an impossible ideal, but the only moral ideal, "to be perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

THE END.

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